An Introduction to the Art of the 1960s
# Table of Contents

**INTRODUCTION** ................. 5

**SECTION I: ART FUNDAMENTALS** .... 7

Introduction to Art History ............ 7

  Methods and Inquiries of Art History .... 7
  The Nature of Art Historical Inquiry .... 7
  Sources, Documents, and the Work of Art
  Historians .................................. 8
  The Development of Art History .......... 8

Brief Overview of the Art of the Western World ................. 9

  Ancient Civilizations ....................... 10
  Art of the Old Stone Age ................... 10
  Art of the Middle Stone Age ............... 10
  Art of the New Stone Age ................... 10
  Ancient Mesopotamian Art .................. 11
  Persian Art .................................. 12
  Ancient Egyptian Art ....................... 12
  Nubian Art .................................. 13
  Greek and Roman Art ....................... 13
    Cycladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean Art ... 13
    Ancient Greek Art ......................... 14
    Etruscan Art ................................ 15
    Roman Art .................................. 15
  Byzantine and Medieval Art ............... 16
  The Renaissance in Southern Europe ..... 17
  The Renaissance in Northern Europe ..... 21
  Baroque Art ................................ 22
  Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Romanticism 24
  Realism and Impressionism ............... 25
  Post-Impressionism and Other Late Nineteenth-Century Developments ........... 26

The Emergence of Modernism ............. 27
  Abstraction .................................. 29
  Pop Art, Minimalism, and Photorealism . . 30
  Earthworks, Installations, and Performance .. 30

Brief Overview of Nonwestern Art ........ 31

  Asian Art ................................... 31
    Chinese Art ................................ 31
    Indian Art .................................. 32
    Japanese Art ................................ 32
  African and Oceanic Art ................... 33
  Islamic Art .................................. 34
  The Americas ................................ 34

Elements of Art ............................. 35

  Formal Qualities of Art .................... 35
    Line ........................................ 36
    Shape and Form .............................. 36
    Perspective .................................. 36
    Color ....................................... 37
    Texture ..................................... 38
    Composition ................................. 38

Processes and Techniques .................. 39

  Drawing ..................................... 40
  Printmaking ................................. 41
  Painting .................................... 42
  Photography .................................. 43
  Sculpture ................................... 43
  Mixed Media ................................ 44
  Performance .................................. 44
  Craft and Folk Art ......................... 44
  Architecture ................................ 45

Section I Summary ....................... 46
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION II: SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE ART OF THE 1960s</th>
<th>48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducing the Sixties</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewind: An Overview of Art in Europe and America after World War II</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: JASPER JOHNS, FLAG, 1954–55</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns’ Early Life and Career</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag: Analysis</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns’ Continued Development and Influence</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: ALLAN KAPROW, 18 HAPPENINGS IN 6 PARTS, 1959</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaprow’s Early Career</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaprow’s Writing on Jackson Pollock</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Happenings in 6 Parts: Analysis</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaprow’s Influence</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section II Summary</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION III: THE EARLY SIXTIES: MELDING ART AND LIFE</th>
<th>57</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melding Art and Life</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, BLACK MARKET, 1961</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauschenberg’s Early Career</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Market: Analysis</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger Context: Interactivity, Participation, and Collaboration</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: CLAES OLDENBURG, FLOOR CAKE, 1962</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldenburg’s Early Career</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Cake: Analysis</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: ANDY WARHOL, MARILYN DIPTYCH, 1962</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warhol’s Early Career</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: NAM JUNE PAIK, ZEN FOR TV, 1963</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paik’s Early Career</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger Context: Fluxus in West Germany</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen for TV: Analysis</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III Summary</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION IV: THE SIXTIES: ART AND POLITICS</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Political Context of the 1960s in Europe and the U.S.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: EDWARD KIENHOLZ, THE PORTABLE WAR MEMORIAL, 1968</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kienholz’s Early Career</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger Context: From Assemblage to Tableaux</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Portable War Memorial: Analysis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: MARTHA ROSLER, RED STRIPE KITCHEN, FROM THE SERIES “HOUSE BEAUTIFUL: BRINGING THE WAR HOME,” c. 1967–72</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosler’s Career</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Development of Photomontage</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Stripe Kitchen, from the Series “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home”: Analysis</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED ARTWORK: FAITH RINGGOLD, AMERICAN PEOPLE SERIES #20: DIE, 1967</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringgold’s Career</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American People Series #20: Die: Analysis</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception of African-American Art in the U.S. in the ’60s and ’70s</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section IV Summary</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION V: THE SIXTIES: MINIMALISM AND CONCEPTUALISM .......... 77

SELECTED ARTWORK: AD REINHARDT, ABSTRACT PAINTING, 1960–61 .......... 77

Reinhardt’s Early Career .................. 77
Abstract Painting: Analysis .............. 78
From the Monochrome to Minimalism .... 78

SELECTED ARTWORK: DONALD JUDD, UNTITLED (STACK), 1967 .......... 79

Judd’s Early Career ....................... 79
Judd’s Essay “Specific Objects” and the Debate over Minimalism ............. 80
Untitled (Stack): Analysis ................ 80
Larger Context: Fabrication and the Artist’s Hand .......................... 81

SELECTED ARTWORK: SOL LEWITT, WALL DRAWING 1, 1968 .......... 81

LeWitt’s Early Career ...................... 81
Wall Drawing 1: Analysis ................ 82
Larger Context: Minimalism’s Relationship to Architecture ................ 83

SELECTED ARTWORK: JOSEPH KOSUTH, ONE AND THREE CHAIRS, 1965 .... 83

Kosuth’s Early Career ..................... 83
“Art After Philosophy” .................... 84
One and Three Chairs: Analysis ........... 84

SELECTED ARTWORK: EDWARD RUSCHA, EVERY BUILDING ON THE SUNSET STRIP, 1966 .................... 85

Ruscha’s Early Career ..................... 85
Every Building on the Sunset Strip: Analysis 85
Larger Context: West Coast Conceptualism 86

SELECTED ARTWORK: HANS HAACKE, NEWS, 1969 .................... 86

Haacke’s Early Career ..................... 86

News: Analysis ............................ 87
The Development of Institutional Critique .......................... 87

Section V Summary .......................... 88

SECTION VI: THE SIXTIES: POST-MINIMALISM ..................... 91

SELECTED ARTWORK: EVA HESSE, REPETITION NINETEEN III, 1968 .... 91

Hesse’s Career ............................. 91
Larger Context: From Minimalism to Post-Minimalism ..................... 91
Repetition Nineteen III: Analysis .................. 92


Serra’s Early Career ....................... 93
Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift (formerly titled Splash Piece: Casting): Analysis .................. 93

SELECTED ARTWORK: MICHAEL HEIZER, DOUBLE NEGATIVE, 1969–70 .... 95

Heizer’s Early Work ....................... 95
From Minimalism to Land Art ............... 95
Double Negative: Analysis .................. 95
Documenting Land Art ..................... 96

Section VI Summary .......................... 96

CONCLUSION ................................ 98

TIMELINE .................................. 99

NOTES ..................................... 102

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................. 104
Introduction

This resource guide explores eighteen works of art produced in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s in the United States and, in one case, in Western Europe. The artists discussed here worked in a wide variety of mediums, from painting and sculpture to new mediums such as video art, installation, performance, and Land art. Many of the works of art included in this guide are considered representative examples of the key artistic movements or tendencies of the time, and in turn influenced the development of art after the 1960s. The in-depth discussions of each work provide an understanding of each artist’s contributions and ambitions, as well as the importance of each work in a larger context, often in dialogue with the history of art as well as with other artistic practices of the moment.

Section I of the guide provides background information on the history of art, including a brief overview of important developments from the ancient period to the present. This introduction focuses on Western art, but also touches on developments in other parts of the world. Included in this section is an overview of the specific terminology used in the fields of art and art history.

The second section of the guide focuses on art in the 1950s in order to set the stage for the art of the 1960s, which comprises the rest of the guide. Section II looks specifically at the transfer of the art world from Paris to New York after World War II and the emergence of several movements in the wake of Abstract Expressionism, the style of painting that dominated the 1950s in the United States. Special attention is paid to the innovations of Jasper Johns and Allan Kaprow, both of whom sought to bring “high art” closer to daily life in ways that would be profoundly influential for art in the 1960s.

Section III discusses works by four artists—Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol, and Nam June Paik—who extended the desire to merge art and life through audience participation and interactivity, the use of everyday objects or images, the strategy of repetition or seriality borrowed from consumer and media culture, and the use of new technologies. Paik is the only artist featured in the guide who was working in Europe at the time, though a year later, he, too, settled in New York City.

The fourth section turns to the issue of art and politics, examining several works made by artists who believed that the tumultuous political landscape of the day ought to be addressed head-on in works of art, with the goal of social change. Although such a view might be commonplace today, it was radical at the time, arriving on the heels of more than a decade dominated by abstract painting. The modernist criticism that had championed such work lauded inward-looking art that was concerned only with issues specific to artistic mediums and not with the world beyond the artwork. Edward Kienholz, Martha Rosler, and Faith Ringgold worked in the mediums of installation and Conceptual art, photomontage and video, and painting, respectively, but they all foregrounded contemporary issues in their approaches. Many of the artists featured in this resource guide were politically active in the ’60s, even those single-mindedly dedicated to abstraction, but these three (among others) brought their politics to bear on their work.

Section V unpacks the related movements of Minimalism and Conceptualism, both of which retreat, in differing ways, from the historical importance of the hand of the artist and the production of autonomous objects as central to our understanding and valuation of works of art. Ad Reinhardt’s development of the black monochrome painting at the beginning of the ’60s serves as a backdrop for the subsequent innovations of Minimalist sculpture (Donald Judd), wall drawings (Sol LeWitt), Conceptual art (Joseph Kosuth and Edward Ruscha), and institutional critique (Hans Haacke). Several of the artists in this section wrote extensively about their work and the work of their peers, a tendency reflected in the discussion through a focus on their most influential essays.

The final section examines three seminal works associated
with the wide-ranging term “Post-Minimalism,” which encompasses sculptures made from nontraditional materials; “process art” that reveals the traces of its own making; and art created in and from the natural landscape, far from the confines of the gallery or museum. Produced at the very same time that Minimalism was being popularized, Post-Minimalist artworks similarly relied on geometry, simplification, abstraction, and repetition as formal or compositional elements, but humanized them, avoiding the cold, hard perfection of Minimalism’s objects. All three artists in the final section—Eva Hesse, Richard Serra, and Michael Heizer—created works that greatly influenced the direction art would take in the 1970s and beyond.

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**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Students should be aware that dates in art history, especially early dates, frequently vary depending on the source and are often highly contested. The dates presented in this resource guide are not necessarily definitive, but are those dates provided by the museums that house the artworks or the sources consulted by the author in writing this guide.
INTRODUCTION TO ART HISTORY

Art history is an academic discipline dedicated to the reconstruction of the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which an artwork was created. The basic goal of this work is to arrive at an understanding of art and its meaning in its historical moment, taking into consideration the formal qualities of a work of art, the function of a work of art in its original context, the goals and intentions of the artist and the patron of the work of art, the social position and perspectives of the audience in the work’s original time and place, and many other related questions. Art history is closely related to other disciplines such as anthropology, history, and sociology. In addition, art history sometimes overlaps with the fields of aesthetics, or the philosophical inquiry into the nature and expression of beauty; and art criticism, or the explanation of current art events to the general public via the press.

This brief introduction to the discipline of art history will help you understand the kinds of questions that one may ask in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of a work of art. We will put these ideas into practice as we proceed through case studies related to the specific topic of the resource guide.

METHODS AND INQUIRIES OF ART HISTORY

Art historians today generally define “art” very broadly and include in their inquiries almost any kind of visual material that is created by people and invested with special meaning and/or valued for its aesthetic appeal. In the past, art historians often limited their focus to what was called “fine art,” which generally included paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, and architecture, usually produced specifically for appreciation by an audience who also understood these objects as works of art. Today we define art much more broadly, also taking into consideration objects that in the past were dismissed as “craft”: textiles, pottery, and body art such as tattoos, for example.

Art historians also consider objects that might not be considered art by their intended audience, including mass-produced posters and advertisements and even the design of ordinary household items like telephones, forks, and the living room sofa.

Art historians acknowledge that the meaning of a work of art can shift over time, and that an artwork may be perceived differently by viewers who approach it from different perspectives. To give one hypothetical example, Michelangelo’s paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel would have certainly been significant in different ways in the eyes of 1) the Pope, who commissioned the work and who had sophisticated theological knowledge and nearly exclusive access to this private space within the Vatican and 2) a worker who was charged with cleaning the floors of the chapel and whose level of literacy was probably quite low. Differences such as social status, education, physical access to a work of art, religious background, race, and gender have an impact on the construction of the meaning of a work of art. Similarly, the paintings’ meaning to a twenty-first-century Protestant, Muslim, or atheist is certainly different from the meaning they had for a practicing Catholic in the sixteenth century, even though the works may be equally admired for their aesthetic value by all of these viewers. In other words, the meaning of a work of art is not fixed; it is sometimes open to multiple interpretations taking into consideration factors such as historical context.

The Nature of Art Historical Inquiry

Art historians generally analyze works of art in two ways that are distinct from one another, but also interrelated. These two modes of analysis are called formal analysis and contextual analysis. Formal analysis focuses on the visual qualities of the work of art itself. A basic assumption of formal analysis is that the artist makes decisions related to the visual aspects of the artwork that can reveal to us something about its meaning. From this point of view,
Aspects of meaning are intrinsic to the work of art. Terms associated with the formal qualities of works of art, or the “elements of art,” are discussed in detail a bit later in this section of the guide. Formal analysis requires excellent skills in observation and description. Beginning our study of an artwork with formal analysis keeps the focus on the object itself, which to the art historian is always primary.

Contextual analysis involves looking outside of the work of art in order to determine its meaning. This involves examining not only the context in which the work was created, but also later contexts in which the work was and continues to be consumed. Contextual analysis focuses on the cultural, social, religious, and economic context in which the work was produced. Art historians may examine issues of patronage, viewer access to the work, the physical location of the work in its original context, the cost of the work of art, the subject matter in relation to other artworks of the time period, and so on.

Art history often emphasizes a chronological development with the assumption that within one cultural setting the work of one generation of artists will have an impact on following generations. Art historians often use comparative study. For example, by contrasting a Gothic with a Renaissance artwork, we can understand more clearly the unique features of each and the series of stylistic changes that lead from one to the other. Then, we can seek to relate these changes to historical context. Art history provides information and insights that add background to the meaning and significance of the works of art we study. As we place these works of art in their cultural and historical context, they are connected to the long history of events that has led up to our present culture.

Sources, Documents, and the Work of Art Historians

Art historians often begin their analysis with a close examination of a work of art. Direct examination of the work of art is ideal because much is lost when we look at a reproduction rather than an original object. In the case of sculpture, it is often difficult to get a proper sense of the scale and the three-dimensional qualities of a piece from a photograph. We lose the texture and some of the rich colors when we experience paintings in reproduction. Even photographs can appear flatter, lacking their subtle transitions from light to dark when seen reproduced in books. It is quite common, though, for art historians to settle for studying from reproductions due to practical constraints. In some cases, works of art might be damaged or even lost over time, and so art historians rely on earlier descriptions to aid in their formal and contextual analysis. In addition to examining the work of art in question, art historians will also seek to understand any associated studies (sketches, preparatory models, etc.) and other works by the artist and his or her contemporaries.

Art historians also use many written sources in the quest for contextual information about a work of art. Often these texts are stored in archives or libraries. Archival sources may include items such as letters between the artist and patron, or other documents pertaining to the commission, and art criticism produced at the time the work of art was made. An art historian might also search for written documentation about the materials used to produce the work of art, such as their cost and source, and about the function of the artwork—how a particular sculpture was used in ritual practice, for example. Art historians also seek to situate the work in the context of the literature, music, theater, and history of the time period.

Art historians may also rely on interviews with artists and consumers of works of art. This is especially the case in cultures that rely more on oral history than on written documents. Guided by the field of anthropology, some art historians also use methods such as participant observation to understand the context of a work of art. An art historian studying masquerade traditions in West Africa, for example, may participate in a performance while carefully documenting the event in order to better understand art traditions.

The Development of Art History

As an academic discipline, art history arose in the mid-eighteenth century. However, we can look at the work of much earlier writers to see how commentary on art has developed over time. The ancient Roman historian Pliny the Elder (23–79 ce) sought to analyze historical and contemporary art in his text Natural History. During the Renaissance, the author and artist Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) gathered the biographies of great Italian artists, past and present, in The Lives of the Artists. Vasari’s text provides us with insights into the changing roles of artists in society during this period and the developing concept of artistic genius.

Modern art history was strongly influenced by eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) was a German scholar who shifted away from Vasari’s biographical emphasis to a rigorous study of stylistic development as related to
historical context. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, art historians continued to develop approaches that placed increasing emphasis on an understanding of the interrelationship between the formal qualities of a work of art and its context.

When considering contemporary views of art history as well as perspectives on art history from the past, it is important to keep in mind that all histories are individual stories and thus will inevitably reflect certain biases. More recently, art history has been revised, particularly by feminist historians, who have noted that the traditional version of art history has largely focused on white men, whether as artists or as patrons. As a result of such revisions, art history has expanded its scope in recent years and has become a field that is broader, more international, more multicultural, and more inclusive than in the past, often involving Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic methods and viewpoints. Moreover, the concern with great artistic geniuses and masterpieces has lessened as the full range of “visual culture,” ranging from advertisement posters to film to photography and television imagery, has come to view.

Much of what we know of the earliest life on earth has been revealed through a study of the objects or artifacts that remain from early cultures. In many cases, the objects that remain are those made of enduring materials such as stone, metal, or fired clay, as opposed to those made of perishable materials like wood or fibers. Environmental conditions also have a major impact on preservation. The hot dry climate of the desert in Egypt, for example, enabled the preservation of even delicate materials like papyrus, and the sealed atmosphere of Egyptian caves and tombs likewise helped to preserve the objects contained within them for our wonder and enjoyment centuries later. In contrast, the humid climate of West Africa means that objects made of perishable materials have had little chance of survival over the course of decades, not to mention centuries.

This is one reason that the history of art as a discipline has placed greater emphasis on Western cultures, often neglecting to focus on developments in Nonwestern cultures. It is important to recognize that the civilizations that are most often studied in art history courses are not necessarily those where the most or the best art was made. Rather, they are the civilizations whose art has been preserved and whose art has been discovered. There are, for example, many sites of important civilizations in Central and South America that though known, remain yet unexplored. Too often the story at these sites has been one of exploitation and destruction, as people carelessly take artifacts to sell them on the international market in antiquities.
ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

Art of the Old Stone Age

The oldest works of art that we will consider are the cave paintings found in Chauvet Cave in southeastern France. These paintings, discovered in 1994, date from c. 30,000 BCE and thus are placed in the Old Stone Age (Upper Paleolithic Period). It should be noted that art historians use the best available information to date works of art from the distant past. Estimated dates are frequently contested and sometimes revised as new information becomes available. Except for a minimal use of yellow, the paintings and engravings in Chauvet Cave were created using red ochre and black charcoal and depict animals such as horses, rhinoceros, lions, buffalos, and mammoths. Additional cave paintings have been discovered in other parts of France and in Spain, with those in Lascaux and Altamira being the most famous. The art in these caves takes the form of large colored drawings of animals such as horses, bears, lions, bison, and mammoths, and the paintings include several outlines of human hands. The earliest scholarship on these drawings considered them to be the spontaneous scribbling of primitive cavemen. However, with further study, it became apparent that the various groups of drawings had been created by skilled artists working within an established tradition. The artists used pigments of red and yellow ochre to add color to the elegant black outlines they had created using charcoal. Though we cannot be sure of their original function, it is possible that these works were created as a part of hunting ceremonies or other ritual behaviors.

Another well-known group of artworks from the Old Stone Age are small stone female figures that have exaggerated bellies, breasts, and pubic areas. The best known of these figures is the Venus (or Woman) of Willendorf (c. 28,000–25,000 BCE), which is about four and one-eighth inches high. In contrast to the exaggerated female features of the body, the facial features of the statue are undefined, the arms are barely visible, and the feet are missing. Scholars contend that these statues were fertility figures although it is not known precisely how they were used.

Art of the Middle Stone Age

During the Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic Period) the climate warmed, and a culture developed that produced art similar in some ways to the cave paintings of the Paleolithic Period. With the warming of temperatures during this era, cave dwellers moved out of their caves and began using rock shelters, as evidenced by the various paintings that have been discovered at such locations in eastern Spain. There has been much scholarly debate regarding the dating of these paintings, but it is generally estimated that they were created from around 7000 BCE until 4000 BCE. The rock shelter paintings, like the cave paintings that preceded them, demonstrate the skill of their creators in the depiction of animal figures. What sets the rock shelter paintings apart from the cave paintings is their depiction of the human figure. Except for one human figure found in the paintings at Lascaux, cave paintings did not include any human beings. The rock shelter paintings, however, portray human beings, both alone and in groups, and there seems to be an emphasis on scenes in which human beings dominate animals.

Art of the New Stone Age

The art forms most often linked with the New Stone Age (Neolithic Period) are rings or rows of rough-hewn stones located in Western Europe. These formations have been dated as early as 4000 BCE. The stones used were often exceedingly large—as much as seventeen feet in height and fifty tons in weight. Indeed, the sheer size of these works led historians to call the stones megaliths, meaning “great stones,” and the culture that created these works is often termed “megalithic.” The most well known of these rock arrangements is the one found at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England. Stonehenge is believed to have
been built in many phases around 2100 BCE. **Stonehenge** features concentric rings made with sarsen (a form of sandstone) stones and smaller “bluestones”—rocks indigenous to the region. The outermost ring is comprised of huge sarsen stones in post and lintel construction—two upright pieces topped with a crosspiece, or lintel. The next ring is composed of bluestones, which encircle a horseshoe-shaped row of five lintel-topped sarsen stones—these are the largest ones used at Stonehenge, with some weighing as much as fifty tons. Outside the formation, to the northeast, is the vertically placed “heel-stone.” If one stands in the center of the rings and looks outward, this “heel-stone” marks the point at which the sun rises on the midsummer solstice.

The works of art and the ideas we have considered thus far have been isolated examples that have survived a very long time. The works and civilizations that we will consider next point to further conditions that allow for the creation of artworks and enable their survival. Usually, art thrives in highly organized cultures with stable population centers—that house ruling classes who in turn support the work of artists.

Also, if a civilization has a tradition of protecting its art in locations that are largely inaccessible, it is more likely that the works from that culture will survive to a point where they are included in a study of art history. Many extant artifacts have come from burial chambers, caves, and tombs, where they have been protected by being naturally concealed.

**Ancient Mesopotamian Art**

The civilizations that arose in Mesopotamia in the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers developed writing and arts in parallel with Egypt (discussed later). Unfortunately, the Mesopotamian civilizations formed in a valley that lacked the natural barriers of deserts and mountains that protected Egypt. This left them vulnerable to invasion, and hence, the history of this ancient region is one of successive conquest and destruction. Moreover, the use of more perishable materials by Mesopotamian civilizations has left us with fewer examples of their arts.

From around 4000 BCE, the Sumerians in Mesopotamia created impressive sculptures and buildings. Religion was a central aspect of Sumerian life, and the Sumerians built massive temples at the centers of their cities. Less complex platform structures evolved over time into the stepped pyramids called **ziggurats**. Around 2334 BCE, the cities of Sumer came under the rule of Sargon of Akkad. Although the Akkadians spoke a different language from the Sumerians, they assimilated Sumerian culture. With the Akkadian dynasty, loyalty to the city-state was supplanted by loyalty to the king, and consequently the art of this period tends to reflect an emphasis on the monarchy, with Akkadian rulers...
depicted in freestanding and relief sculptures. Around 2150 BCE, Akkadian rule came to an end as the Guti, barbarous mountaineers, invaded and took control. About fifty years later, however, the cities of Sumer were able to reassert control, and a Neo-Sumerian ruler was established as the King of Ur. Perhaps the greatest known works of this era were the ziggurats that were built at the city centers. The ziggurats functioned primarily as temples but also served as administrative and economic centers.

The next important civilization in Mesopotamia was that of the Babylonians. For centuries Mesopotamia had witnessed the coexistence of several independent city-states, but around 1792 BCE, Hammurabi, king of the city-state of Babylonia, was able to centralize power. Hammurabi left an enduring legacy in that he codified Babylonian law—the Code of Hammurabi is the oldest legal code known in its entirety. The best-known artwork from this period, preserved in the Louvre Museum, is related to this code of law; it is a stone stele onto which Hammurabi’s code is carved with a sculpture in high relief at the top that depicts Hammurabi receiving inspiration for his code of law from the sun-god, Shamash.

While the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian cultures grew in southern Mesopotamia, the Assyrians dominated in the north. From about 900 BCE to around 600 BCE, the Assyrians were the most powerful civilization in the Near East. Among the most notable of Assyrian artworks are relief carvings, which often depict battles, sieges, hunts, and other important events. Throughout the seventh century BCE, the Assyrian hold on power weakened, and from c. 612–538 BCE, Babylonia once again became the dominant force in the region. It was during this Neo-Babylonian period that the famous hanging gardens of Babylon were constructed. Another important construction at this time was the gateway to the great ziggurat of the temple of Bel, called the Ishtar Gate, which is considered one of the greatest works of architecture in which figures—in this case animal figures—are superimposed on a walled surface.

**Persian Art**

The Persian Empire (c. 538 BCE–330 BCE) flourished in what is present-day Iran. The Persians were notable for their impressive architectural achievements, the most important of which was the palace at Persepolis, which was constructed of stone, brick, and wood and reflects the influence of Egyptian architecture.

**Ancient Egyptian Art**

Ancient Egyptian civilization is generally dated from c. 3000 BCE, following the predynastic period, through
332 BCE, when Egypt was conquered by Alexander the Great. Recognizable works include the great monuments of ancient Egypt: the Sphinx, the great pyramids at Giza, the larger-than-life-sized statues of the pharaohs, and the portrait head of Queen Nefertiti.

Much Egyptian art emphasizes a style called **hierarchical scale**, which uses the status of figures or objects to determine their relative sizes within an artwork. Hierarchical scale is exemplified in the Palette of King Narmer, a relic from the Old Kingdom. This slab of stone, which may have been used as a ceremonial palette for mixing cosmetics, presents King Narmer centrally, and he is depicted as being considerably larger than the other figures. In the main image on the palette, Narmer is seen holding the hair of a fallen enemy, with his arm raised in preparation for delivering a deathblow. In the lowest section of the palette, below the king and his enemy, are two smaller figures of defeated enemies. The organization of the figures, their relative sizes, and their poses recurred in most of the ancient Egyptian art that followed. Figures are presented so that each part of the body is shown as clearly as possible, in a technique known as "**fractional representation**." The head is in profile with the eye in frontal view, the torso is in full frontal view, and the lower body, legs, and feet are in profile. This formula became a standard style that endured for centuries as the typical way of representing people in Egyptian art.

We know a great deal about the art of Egypt because excellent conditions for preservation were present in much of Egypt. In addition, the burial customs of the Egyptians, which decreed mumification and entombment with lavish furnishings, symbolic servants, and jewelry, resulted in rich stores of objects and images. The most famous of the Egyptian tombs is that of the boy king, Tutankhamun. By the twentieth century, most of the ancient Egyptian tombs of the Pharaohs had been broken into and robbed of the materials inside. However, Tutankhamun’s tomb, because it was cleverly hidden, remained almost completely intact until 1922. When it was opened, the excavators found a treasure-trove of objects, all superbly made of rich materials. Among the most famous of the objects is Tutankhamun’s burial mask. This mask, found in the innermost layer of the king’s sarcophagus, rested on the mummy’s face and shoulders. It is made of gold and is decorated with blue glass and semiprecious stones. The mask presents an idealized portrait of the young king.

**Nubian Art**

The kingdom of Nubia lay to the south of Egypt and covered a large area of Africa. As contemporary historians become increasingly interested in revising and expanding art history, more knowledge about this great African civilization is being uncovered. Indeed, it is now known that there was a period in the history of Egypt when Nubia ruled the area, and the Pharaohs of that era were Nubian. While there are few collections that feature Nubian works, this may well soon change as revisions to the story of art continue.

**GREEK AND ROMAN ART**

**Cycladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean Art**

The Aegean island cultures were very important as precursors of the Greeks in terms of art production. Three major cultures flourished on the islands in the Aegean Sea, on Crete, and along the Aegean coast. The earliest of these cultures, the Cycladic culture, flourished from about 3200 to 2000 BCE in the Cyclades, a group of islands in
the Aegean. Archaeologists still have many unanswered questions about Cycladic culture, but the simplified, geometric nude female figures from this area are highly appealing to modern sensibilities. In addition to these sculptures, the Cycladic culture produced decorated pieces of pottery as well as marble bowls and jars. Eventually, the Cycladic culture was supplanted by the Minoan culture, which developed on the island of Crete and reached its pinnacle in the second millennium BCE.

The Minoan culture centered around the city of Knossos on Crete, where the legend of the Minotaur—the creature believed to be half man and half bull who devoured those who entered his maze—is supposed to have taken place. The maze was actually the royal palace, a sprawling complex that has since been excavated. The art of these island people depicts sea life and includes statues of a female snake goddess. The Minoans created artworks that were characterized by a naturalistic pictorial style. Their paintings took two major forms: frescoes painted on palace walls and pottery designs. The architectural achievements of the Minoans were also impressive, as they built four major palaces, all completely unfortified and designed in a light, flexible, and organic style.

The collapse of the Minoan civilization coincided with the pinnacle of Mycenaean culture, and as a result, many historians believe the Minoans were destroyed by the Mycenaeans. The Mycenaean culture was centered around the city of Mycenae on the Greek mainland. The Mycenaeans built elaborate tombs, and their burial practices allowed for a large number of objects to be preserved. The objects that are best known are made of gold and show astonishing levels of mastery in goldsmithing. Additionally, the Mycenaeans demonstrated much skill in their use of relief sculpture.

**Ancient Greek Art**

From around 660 to 475 BCE, during the Archaic Period, the Greeks, influenced by the stone sculptures of Egypt and Mesopotamia, created sculptures carved in marble and limestone. These freestanding figures borrowed the frontal pose used in Egyptian art, but were more dynamic and placed greater emphasis on depicting realistic human features. Temples were also built during this time period using columns in the early **Doric** and **Ionic** decorative styles. Vase painting was another notable art form and was done in many different styles. Some vases portrayed black silhouetted figures, while those in the **Corinthian** style set
figures against a floral, ornamented background. Athenian-style vases used black figures, but were more linear and larger in scale. Red-figure vases, with red figures standing out against a black background, were also common.

The best-known ancient Greek art is that from the city-state of Athens from the Classical Period. During the Early Classical Period, temples were typically built with sturdy, Doric columns. Unfortunately, much of the sculpture from this period has not survived, but luckily Roman copies have provided us with a good deal of information on these ancient works. The sculpture of the Early Classical Period was characterized by its solemnity, strength, and simplicity of form and most often focused on a figure or scene either in the moment before or the moment after an important action. Significant advances were made in sculptural techniques, as the stiff frontal postures of the Archaic Period were largely abandoned in favor of more complex and life-like figures and positions.

Greek statuary evolved from a stiff, frontal presentation like that of the Egyptians to an increasingly natural-looking figure. A pose called “contrapposto,” or counter positioning, was invented to show the body to its best advantage. In contrapposto, the standing figure is posed with its weight shifted onto one leg, for a more relaxed, naturalistic appearance. Greek sculpture set the model for thousands of years in Western art, and the Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical artists of the fifteenth through early nineteenth centuries aspired to equal the perfection displayed by the surviving Greek statues.

The Middle Classical Period witnessed important advances in architecture as is evident in the temples of this time period. The temple called the Parthenon, restored in 447 BCE after being destroyed by the Persians in 480 BCE, is one of the most admired works of all ages, and the use of columns as exemplified in the Parthenon has been a principal feature of Western architecture for more than two thousand years.

Architecture declined during the Late Classical Period as Athens was defeated in the Peloponnesian War. Temples in this era were still built using simple Doric columns, but the use of highly decorative Corinthian columns became more and more popular. The Hellenistic Period saw an increasing influence from Eastern civilizations as Greek styles blended with those of Asia Minor. Notable works of this time period include freestanding sculptures such as the Venus de Milo and the Laocoon Group, which are masterworks designed to present ideals of beauty.

**Etruscan Art**

The art of the Etruscan civilization is seen as a transition from the ideals of Greece to the pragmatic concerns of the Romans. Etruscan civilization arose in what is now Italy in the first millennium BCE. Like other cultures we have examined, this one is known largely from the arts of tomb decoration. Nothing remains of Etruscan buildings as these were constructed of brick and wood. However, ceramic models depict temples with tiled, gabled roofs supported by columns in the fashion of the Greeks. Extant Etruscan artifacts also include sarcophagi lids and other art forms made of baked clay, as well as objects that display the Etruscans’ talent in bronze work. The only paintings that remain from the Etruscan culture are those found on the walls and ceilings of tombs. These were done in bright, flat colors, and they show figures playing music and dancing as part of funeral celebrations.

**Roman Art**

The story of Rome is one of conquest and empire building. Early Roman art reflected the influence of Etruscan art. However, by the second century BCE many Roman sculptures and other artworks were variations of Greek works, and the standards for idealized presentations of Roman rulers were based on those of the Greeks. The Romans, however, made pioneering advancements in architecture and engineering. The Roman discovery of the equivalent of modern concrete was a major contribution to architecture, as it enabled Roman builders to fill the spaces between their stone walls with rocks and rubble bound together by the concrete mixture. With this strong material, the Romans were able to construct huge domed buildings. They also pioneered the use of the curved arch, using this form to build bridges and aqueducts. These structures were part of a paved road system, making communication and control very effective in the Empire. Two buildings that can still be seen in Rome, the Colosseum (72–80 CE) and the Pantheon (c. 126 CE), remain as monuments to the engineering genius of the Romans.

The Romans created numerous sculptures. Often, colossal triumphal arches would be topped with relief sculptures portraying Roman emperors or Roman military victories. The Romans also created relief sculptures for funerary purposes. Tombs and sarcophagi were decorated with reliefs. Some of these reliefs were simply decorative, but many others had narrative subject matter. The Romans also sculpted portraits, which ranged in size from tiny busts to huge statues. During the Roman Republic it became
common for members of a funeral procession to carry small carved images of the deceased family member. Later, statues in memory of great statesmen or other noble figures were erected in public areas. Both the funerary sculptures and the public statues did not present naturalistic depictions of their subjects. Rather, the Romans favored an idealistic style that highlighted Roman ideals. The art of the Romans not only had a tremendous influence on the art of the Middle Ages, but also had a notable impact on the art of the Renaissance and much of the art that followed.

**BYZANTINE AND MEDIEVAL ART**

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the connections between its parts disintegrated, and what was once a vast empire evolved into separate and often warring kingdoms. But even as the Empire collapsed in Western Europe, it continued in Byzantium. The art that is best known from this Eastern culture is mosaic work in which small ceramic tiles, pieces of stone, or glass were set into a ground material to create large murals. It is an art that is largely Christian in content and can best be studied in the glimmering, shining mosaic walls of the great churches of Ravenna. Although Ravenna is in present-day Italy, it was then under Byzantine control. In terms of Byzantine architecture, the Hagia Sophia (532–537 ce), built in Constantinople, is still considered one of the greatest architectural achievements in history.

The medieval period witnessed a great deal of civil strife, and consequently the art of this era was preserved largely by the Church. During these times, the majority of the population was illiterate; formal education was largely limited to the noble class and the clergy. The international language was Latin, and books were hand copied on vellum or parchment. The preservation and production of books was largely confined to monasteries, where the monks spent time copying and illustrating the books in their collections, which were so valuable that they were chained to the tables where they were read. These illuminated manuscripts were remarkable works of art and helped facilitate the exchange of artistic ideas between northern and southern Europe. Among the many notable examples are the Book of Kells (late eighth or early ninth century) and the Coronation Gospels (c. 800–810).

Notable from the early medieval period (c. 375–1025) is the art of nomadic Germanic peoples, particularly their metalwork. The metal arts of this time period were abstract,
decorative, and geometric and often took the form of small-scale, portable jewelry or ornaments made of bronze, silver, or gold and covered with patterns of jewels. Artifacts from this era also exist from the seafaring culture of the Vikings in Scandinavia. While metalwork was popular with the Germanic peoples, wood was the most important medium to the Vikings, who carved artistic designs and sculptures on their wooden ships. As a result of Viking invasions, the artistic styles of the Vikings eventually merged with those found in Anglo-Saxon England and Celtic Ireland. The resultant style is often termed Hiberno-Saxon.

In later medieval art, the architecture of churches became a dominant art form. Every city, town, and village had a church at its center, and the largest of these are masterpieces of art that often took more than a century to complete. The earliest churches of this period used a Roman arch as the basis of their design, and so the style used is called Romanesque. One famous example is Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, France (c. 1070–1120). Romanesque churches were stone vaulted buildings that often replaced earlier churches that had highly flammable wooden roofs. Romanesque churches are usually formed of a tunnel of arches called a barrel vault. A vault is an arch-shaped structure that is used as a ceiling or as a support to a roof. Massive walls had to be built to support the heavy stone arches of the Romanesque style. Consequently, window and door openings were usually kept quite small and were often decorated with carvings and relief sculpture.

The Gothic style developed in the first half of the twelfth century and remained popular into the sixteenth century. Though this style was used for some secular buildings, it was largely applied to the construction of churches. One characteristic of the Gothic style was the use of pointed arches, which gave an upward, soaring sense to Gothic interiors. Another important element of the Gothic style was the addition of ribbed vaults, a framework of thin stone ribs or arches built under the intersection of the vaulted sections of the ceiling. A key innovation came in the early Gothic period when architects learned that the downward and outward pressure created by the arches of the barrel vault could be counteracted by the use of flying buttresses—additional bracing material and arches placed on the exterior of the building. This advance allowed for larger windows, many of which were filled with beautiful stained glass, and higher ceilings. A classic example of a Gothic cathedral is Chartres Cathedral in France (begun c. 1145; rebuilt after 1194). Here the effect of the tall arches and the brightly colored light from the stained-glass windows directs attention heavenward.

THE RENAISSANCE IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

Although we often tend to divide historical periods into a series of discrete and separate styles and events, in actuality, history is much more complicated and subtle. The transition from the later medieval period to the Renaissance provides a good example of this, as the styles from this period cannot be neatly identified as either Gothic or Renaissance, but rather involve a mix of the two. The artist
most often mentioned in connection with this transitional time period is a Florentine named Giotto di Bondone (1267–1336/37), who is best known for his frescoes. A key advance visible in Giotto's works is his use of a simple perspective, achieved in large part by overlapping and modeling his figures in the round. This technique created the illusion of a stage for his figures, giving the viewer a sense of looking into the event. Giotto's works were different from many Gothic works as he gave his figures powerful gestures and emotional expressions. To our eyes, his paintings may not look entirely naturalistic, but his artistic innovations must have had quite an impact on viewers at the time, who were accustomed to the flat, unexpressive, and stylized figures of the Gothic style.

Like the art of ancient Greece, the art of the Renaissance continues to have an impact on art today. It is interesting to note that a change in the economy played a key part in triggering the Renaissance. It was in this time period that paper money was first developed, and its use led, in part, to the vast fortunes accumulated by notables such as the Medici family. These wealthy families were the major patrons of the arts during the Renaissance era. Another important factor was the fact that examples of Greek and Roman art were readily available in Italy, and these classical works of art had a tremendous impact on the art of the Renaissance.

As we discuss the art of this period and later, you will observe that the lives and works of individual artists are often highlighted, while this has not been the case in our discussion of earlier periods. In part this can be attributed to a new emphasis on the individual and the concept of individual genius that emerged during the Renaissance. Until the time of the Renaissance, painters and sculptors were, in accordance with Greek traditions of art, considered artisans. That is, they were people who were viewed as being of lesser status because they worked with their hands. During the Renaissance the role of artists in society changed, as great artists came to be recognized as intellectual figures. Consequently, artists were accorded a special place in society.

An important event in the beginning of the Renaissance was a competition held in the city of Florence in 1401 for the design of the doors for the city's new baptistery. The winner of that competition was Lorenzo Ghiberti (1381?–1455), who designed a door panel that had figures harkening back to those of classical Greece. Ghiberti's panel design depicts the sacrifice of Isaac, in which Isaac appears as a classical Greek figure. Soon after the doors were installed, Ghiberti was asked to make a second set for another entrance to the cathedral. This second set took more than twenty-five years to complete. The doors were so magnificent that Michelangelo called them the “Gates of Paradise,” and they have been referred to by that name ever since.

The second-place winner in the competition was Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446). After losing the competition, he concentrated on architecture and won a competition to complete the dome of the cathedral in Florence, which had remained unfinished for many years because architects had not been able to construct the huge vault that was required to span the open space. Brunelleschi achieved this major engineering feat with the help of a double-shelled dome design that has been imitated by many later architects. Brunelleschi is also credited with developing linear (single vanishing point) perspective. Masaccio (1401–28), a Renaissance painter, is given credit for putting
Brunelleschi’s theory into practice, as he used both linear and aerial perspective in his frescoes. The development of linear perspective had a tremendous and lasting influence on the world of art.

Among the most remarkable of Renaissance artists was Donatello (1389?–1466), who is widely considered the founder of modern sculpture. The influence of classical antiquity on his sculpture was strong, as evidenced by his best-known work, a bronze statue of David (c. 1420s–60s). This work was the first known freestanding nude statue to have been cast since antiquity. Toward the end of his life, Donatello’s sculptures reflected a greater emphasis on naturalism and the expression of character and dramatic action.

A generation later, the work of Botticelli (1444?–1510), particularly his best-known painting, The Birth of Venus (c. 1482), established an image of female beauty that has lasted through the centuries. His long-necked Venus with her languid pose and flowing hair was one of the first paintings of a full-length nude female since antiquity.

The generation of artists that followed are often referred to as High Renaissance artists. Two well-known artists of this time period, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and Michelangelo (1475–1564), are the models for the term “Renaissance Man.” Leonardo da Vinci is well known as an inventor, but also is recognized as an architect, engineer, painter, sculptor, scientist, and musician. His design for the locks that control movements along canals from one level to another is still used today, and his drawings of submarines and helicopters have been found to be viable models. Two of his paintings, The Last Supper (c. 1495–98) and the Mona Lisa (c.1503–05), have become so well known that they are now icons of popular culture. Leonardo’s key innovation in painting, which is readily apparent in the Mona Lisa, is the use of sfumato. Sfumato, from the Italian word fumo, meaning smoke, is the use of mellowed colors and a blurred outline. Sfumato allows forms to blend subtly into one another without perceptible transitions.

At the same time that Leonardo was working in Florence, another artist, Michelangelo di Buonarotti, was at work on the piece that would establish his reputation as a sculptor. The city held a competition to have a statue created from a massive piece of marble that it had acquired, only to discover that the marble was flawed. Taking this difficult piece, which had a large crack in the middle, Michelangelo turned it into his vision of David (1504). The statue is larger than life-sized, as it was originally meant to be placed high on the façade of the cathedral in Florence and would have been viewed from far below. The beautiful carving, the smooth texture of the finished marble, and the striking pose were seen as the very embodiment of the spirit of Florence as a republic.

Throughout his stormy career, Michelangelo created a large number of other important sculptures, but it is a painting that often comes to mind when people hear his name. In 1505, Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to design his tomb. Michelangelo began sculpting great statues such as Moses (c. 1513–15), The Dying Slave (1513–16), and The Bound Slave (1513–16) to be included in the Pope’s colossal tomb. However, in the midst of this commission, the Pope canceled the project for uncertain reasons. The cancellation of his work on the Pope’s tomb was one of the greatest disappointments of Michelangelo’s career, and he was bitter and hesitant when Pope Julius II gave him another commission. This time, the artist was

asked to decorate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It took Michelangelo four years, from 1508 to 1512, to cover the seven hundred square yards of the ceiling, but the result was an astonishing tour de force. The great masterpiece of the Sistine Ceiling has received renewed attention in recent decades, as restorers set about cleaning the great frescoes. The cleaning removed the collection of oil, wax, and grime that had accumulated over the centuries, and the colors have returned to their original brightness. Not everyone was happy with the results of the cleaning, however, and a controversy about this restoration, as well as the restoration of artworks in general, continues within the art world.

One of the most influential painters of the High Renaissance was Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520). When he was a young painter, Raphael was brought to Rome, where Julius II gave him several commissions. During this period, Raphael learned much from Michelangelo, his older rival. Unlike Michelangelo, Raphael was not a loner, but employed numerous assistants to help him cover the Pope’s official chambers with large, sumptuous frescoes, notably the School of Athens (c. 1508–11), an homage to the great Greek philosophers and scientists. Raphael is considered the most influential painter of the Madonna. His masterworks, such as the Sistine Madonna (c. 1513–14), created an image of the Virgin Mary that has endured in religious paintings throughout the centuries.

Rome and Florence were not the only locations to witness an incredible flowering in the arts. Venice, too, became a center of artistic creativity. Giorgione (1477/78–1510) is credited with making innovations in the subject matter of landscapes, as he painted scenes not taken from the Bible or from classical or allegorical stories. Prior to Giorgione’s
painting The Tempest (c. 1508), artists had generally begun with the figures that were to be the subject matter of the painting and then added the background. However, in The Tempest the landscape became the subject of the painting—the figures depicted are of lesser importance than the storm that threatens them.

Titian Vecelli (c. 1488–1576) was one of the most prolific of the Venetian painters. Titian is well known for his portraits of his patrons, and he is also recognized as having been the greatest colorist of the Renaissance artists. Titian was an innovative portraitist. He used various elements of setting, such as a column or a curtain, as the backdrop for his portraits instead of an atmospheric neutral background, as had been the custom. The influence of Titian’s use and arrangement of background elements can be seen in portraiture up through the twenty-first century.

Tintoretto (1518–94), another great Venetian painter, is often linked with an artistic style called Mannerism that grew in popularity in the late sixteenth century. Mannerist works are characterized by the distortion of certain elements such as perspective or scale and are also recognizable by their use of acidic colors and the twisted positioning of their subjects. Although Tintoretto used some Mannerist pictorial techniques, his color schemes differed from those of the Mannerists. Tintoretto presented his figures from dramatic angles—it is said that he used small figures as models and arranged them and rearranged them until he had the most dramatic effect. He also used dramatic contrasts of light and dark, called chiaroscuro, to heighten the emotional impact of his subjects. Tintoretto’s later works are marked by their spiritual subject matter, and his use of sharp perspectives and chiaroscuro anticipate the Baroque era.

One of the most important events impacting the history of sixteenth-century art was the Reformation. Protestants criticized the opulence and corruption of the Catholic Church and called for its purification. For art, this meant a move away from the richly decorated churches and religious imagery of the Renaissance. The Church reacted to the Protestant Reformation by launching a Counter Reformation, which emphasized, even more than before, lavish church decoration and art of a highly dramatic and emotional nature. One of the artists most closely associated with the Counter Reformation is Dominikos Theotokopoulos, known as El Greco. El Greco was strongly influenced by Tintoretto’s paintings, and he worked for a period of time in Titian’s workshop in Venice. In 1576, El Greco left Italy for Toledo, Spain. El Greco is one of the most well-known of the Mannerist painters, and his dramatic use of elongated figures captured the religious fervor of the Counter Reformation. The works of both El Greco and Tintoretto can be seen as transitional works bridging the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque period.

THE RENAISSANCE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

During the fifteenth century, the artworks being produced in northern Europe were smaller in scale than those of contemporaneous artists to the south. However, the work of northern artists displayed a degree of realistic detail beyond what can be seen in works of the south, primarily due to their use of new oil paints. While the Renaissance was occurring in Italy, much of European art north of the Alps was still Gothic in style. The influence of classical antiquity was also much less of a factor in the north, as the northerners did not share Italy’s cultural connection with ancient Rome, nor did they have the advantage of being in close proximity to ancient Roman works as did their Italian counterparts.

The art of northern Europe in the sixteenth century demonstrates a far greater awareness of the Italian Renaissance than that of the fifteenth century. Many artists traveled to Italy to study the great works of the Renaissance, and some Italian artists brought these ideas with them when they traveled to the north. Engravers copied some of the more notable Italian works, and these engravings became available throughout Europe, thus spreading the ideas and styles of the Renaissance. Trade connections between upper-class German merchants and merchants in Venice, a center of trade and art, provided another avenue of influence.

Though the influence of the Italian masters was notable, not all northern artists embraced the ideals and innovative techniques of the Renaissance, as many maintained a more traditional approach. Moreover, though linear perspective and the colors used farther south did travel northward, the manner in which they were used in the northern countries was quite different.

During the fifteenth century and into the early decades of the sixteenth century, areas of southern Germany witnessed a flowering of artistic production. Matthias Grünewald (1475–1528) and Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) are often considered the greatest artists of the Renaissance in northern Europe. Although only ten of Grünewald’s works have survived, his influence has nonetheless been notable. Grünewald is known for his religious scenes and his depiction
of Christ’s crucifixion. The Isenheim Altarpiece (c. 1510–15), a work consisting of nine panels mounted on two sets of folding wings, is considered to be his greatest masterpiece.

Albrecht Dürer is perhaps the most famous artist of Reformation Germany. Dürer’s early training was largely influenced by late Gothic works, but as the ideas of the Italian Renaissance spread northward in the sixteenth century, Dürer’s work began to reflect some of these new influences. Dürer aimed to achieve a style that combined the naturalistic detail favored by artists of the north with the theoretical ideas developed by Italian artists. He traveled to Italy, studied the work of his Italian contemporaries, and brought his new knowledge back to Germany. Dürer wrote about theories of art and published many series of woodcuts and copper engravings, such as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (c. 1498).

Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543) is another important artist of this era, and he is considered one of the greatest Renaissance portraitists. Though born in Germany, Holbein is best known for his work in England. He became court painter to King Henry VIII of England, and his portrait of Henry VIII shows not only his talent for presenting details, but also his ability to capture the psychological character of his subjects. Holbein’s works became the model and standard for English painting up through the nineteenth century.

BAROQUE ART

The term “Baroque” is generally used to refer to artworks produced from the late sixteenth century through the mid-eighteenth century. Baroque styles differed from those of the Renaissance in that Baroque artworks tended to be less static than Renaissance examples; the Baroque is characterized by a greater sense of movement and energy. The political structure of Europe during the Baroque era also differed from that of the Renaissance. Whereas the Renaissance witnessed wars between cities, the Baroque era saw conflicts between empires. During this time, the Church was determined to preserve its dominance in Spain and Italy, and movements like the Jesuits were founded to convert the peoples of other areas. Baroque art appealed largely to the emotions, and thus, these artists, influenced by the Counter Reformation, aimed at dramatic and moving appeals to faith.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe were a time when society was governed by a ruling class that viewed its power as a divine right. Some of the most powerful sovereigns ever to rule are from this period. Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia, and King Louis XIV of France dominated the lives of the people of their countries. It was a time that saw the ongoing concentration of power and wealth into the hands of a few, until the results eventually became intolerable for the majority of the people. While a small minority of the population lived in great luxury, the lives of ordinary people were generally quite difficult, and eventually this disparity gave rise to protests like those found in the writings of Enlightenment authors, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in particular. Ironically, however, it was the patronage of the wealthy ruling class that gave rise to the great works of art of the period.

As we might expect, the art of the Baroque period moved away from the classic simplicity and calm that was so characteristic of Renaissance works. The word “baroque” has come to represent the richness of color and ornamentation that heightened the energy and emotion that were characteristic of the great works of art of this period. The emphasis was on dynamic works that presented imagery in the most dramatic way possible.

Baroque painters made use of chiaroscuro, using exaggerated contrasts between light and dark to create a theatrical kind of lighting that made the subject appear to be in a spotlight. Caravaggio (1571–1610), an Italian Baroque painter, was renowned for his dramatic use of light and dark, and his technique influenced many artists who followed. Caravaggio’s work is so important that artworks using extremes of dark and light are often termed “caravagggesque.” Caravaggio’s work is also notable for its provocative degree of naturalism. For example, Caravaggio portrayed the Virgin Mary and the apostles not as noble figures in classical garb as they had traditionally been represented, but instead depicted them as poor and simple folks in threadbare garments. His use of actual lower-class individuals as models for his work helped him achieve this effect. It is no wonder that several patrons of Caravaggio’s canvases rejected them for this reason.

With recent revisions of art history, a woman named Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1652) has also joined the ranks of important Baroque artists. Gentileschi, the daughter of a painter, had the unusual opportunity to study in her father’s studio. She is particularly known for her remarkable adaptation of Caravaggio’s techniques. Her works include self-portraits and paintings of Old Testament women.

The most important Baroque artist, Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), the son of a sculptor, was a child prodigy who received recognition from the Pope at age seventeen. Bernini did his most significant work in sculpture, but he was also a talented architect, painter, and draftsman. He worked as
a designer in the theater, and many of his works reflect the influence of his theatrical background. His most important masterpiece, the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa (1647–52), is set into the altar of the Cornaro Chapel. The space includes a concealed stained-glass window that bathes the figure of the saint in dramatic gold lighting, as if she were on a stage. Bernini treated his medium in a new way as well. He did not adhere to the classical calm and natural flow of drapery around the figure that had been used in the past. Instead, Bernini pushed the use of marble to new limits and tried to make stone look like real fabric and even clouds.

The importance of the Baroque style extended beyond Italy. In Flanders, Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) established a huge workshop and produced works of great energy and color that became models for many artists. In the mid-seventeenth century, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), a Dutch artist, created some of the best-known works from the Baroque period. Rembrandt is recognized not only as a painter and printmaker, but also as one of the greatest draftsmen ever. Perhaps his best-known work is The Night Watch (1642), more properly known as Sortie of Captain Banning Cocq’s Company of the Civic Guard. Like many other group portraits of the time, each member of the company depicted paid a certain sum to be included in the painting. Rembrandt chose to break with tradition and grouped the members of the company in a way that gave more attention to some members than to others. This break with tradition, as well as other problems in his life, ultimately
caused the decline of his career. Though Rembrandt died in poverty, the self-portraits of his later years are considered to be some of the greatest studies of the inner life of the sitter ever to be painted.

It might be argued that the Baroque period reached its peak in France. There, Louis XIV had come to power, and his long reign was marked by a blossoming of French culture. Louis XIV united all of France and built a lavish palace at Versailles beginning in 1669. The palace and its grounds covered about two thousand acres and included various grand chateaux and gardens. There was a stable, capable of housing hundreds of horses, and a grand orangerie, or greenhouse, for the king’s orange trees. Eventually there was also a zoo and a system of fountains and waterfalls that included a grand canal large enough for the staging of mock sea battles. The opulence and power of this “sun king,” around whom the world of the court revolved, became a model that contemporaneous monarchs tried to emulate.

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An important feature of Louis XIV’s court that was to influence art well into the nineteenth century was the system of choosing and supporting artists called the Salon. This annual exhibition established a set of rules for judging art that is still influential in the art world today. It was also under the rule of Louis XIV that the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, often referred to simply as the “Academy,” was established, and it soon came to be a means for imposing aesthetic standards and principles of taste.

To the south, the Spanish court of King Philip IV of Spain tried to emulate the court of France, and his court painter, Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), was a contemporary of Bernini. Velázquez’s method of building his figures from patches of color, rather than starting from a drawing, became a model for many later artists. In fact, Velázquez’s work had an influence on the movement we call Impressionism.

**ROCOCO, NEOCLASSICISM, AND ROMANTICISM**

While the Rococo style might be seen as an extension of the Baroque period, it is quite different in form and content. Whereas the Baroque aimed to arouse grand emotions, Rococo works were celebrations of gaiety, romance, and the frivolity of the grand life at court, particularly the court at Versailles. The emphasis was on light-hearted decoration with the use of gold and pastel colors.

Three artists who excelled at capturing the elegance and wit so valued by their aristocratic patrons are considered the greatest masters of the Rococo style. Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) was the leader of a new generation and the innovator of a new genre of painting called the fête galante. Paintings of this genre generally depicted members of the nobility in elegant contemporary dress enjoying leisure time in the countryside. François Boucher (1703–70) was influenced by Watteau’s delicate style. He became the favorite painter of Madame Pompadour, mistress to Louis XV, and his works often transformed the characters of classical myth into scenes of courtly gallantry, with an emphasis on nubile nudes. Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) was also promoted by Madame Pompadour. Fragonard studied with Boucher, and his works strongly reflect Boucher’s influence.

The Revolution of 1789 in France ushered in an era of great change throughout Europe, and the idea of a democratic republic ruled by and for the people was reflected in the artwork of the time. In an attempt to hearken back to the democratic ideals of the ancient world, art of this period demonstrated a revival of interest in the art of classical Greece and Rome. This style, called Neoclassicism, emerged in the decades leading up to the Revolution and was also influenced by Enlightenment philosophy. The Neoclassical style, a direct challenge to the Rococo and its associations with the aristocracy, is epitomized in the work of Jacques Louis David (1748–1825), whose paintings, such as the Oath of the Horatii (1784), illustrated republican virtues. Following the Revolution, David joined members of the new government as the master of ceremonies for the grand revolutionary mass rallies. Later he became a dedicated painter to Napoleon Bonaparte, and in this capacity he painted large propagandistic canvases that would seem to undermine his earlier revolutionary ideals. A closer investigation of his work and his career reveals the complicated world of an artist and his patrons. The work of David’s pupil, Jean Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), shows the sharp outlines, unemotional figures, careful geometric composition, and rational order that are hallmarks of the Neoclassical style.

Ingres’s rival, Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), was a proponent of Romanticism. This style hearkened back to the emotional emphasis of the Baroque and had similar characteristics, though the subject matter was different. Whereas Neoclassical works emphasized line, order, and a cool detachment, Romantic painting tended to be highly imaginative and was characterized by an emotional and dreamlike quality—the Romantics favored feeling over reason. Romantic works are also characterized by their incorporation of exotic or melodramatic elements and...
often took awe-inspiring natural wonders as their subject matter. Delacroix’s works are characteristic of the Romantic movement in that they centered on exotic themes and included foreign settings, violence involving animals, and historical subject matter. Théodore Géricault (1791–1824) and William Blake (1757–1827) were also important Romantic artists.

**REALISM AND IMPRESSIONISM**

In many ways, Realism was a reaction to Neoclassicism and Romanticism. The Realist style was inspired by the idea that painting must illustrate all the features of its subjects, including the negative ones. It was also obligated to show the lives of ordinary people as subjects that were as important as the historical and religious themes that dominated the art exhibitions of the day. The artist who represented this movement most forcefully was Gustave Courbet (1819–77), a flamboyant and outgoing personality who outraged conventional audiences by showing a painting of ordinary workmen repairing a road at the official government-sponsored Salon. This work, called The Stonebreakers (1849–50), also had political implications in the context of a wave of revolutions that spread across Europe beginning in 1848. Realism can also be seen in the works of Honoré Daumier (1808–79) and Jean François Millet (1814–75).

Impressionism largely grew out of dissatisfaction with the rigid rules that had come to dominate the Salons held to recognize selected artists each year. Édouard Manet (1832–83) is sometimes referred to as the first Impressionist. Although he refused to consider himself as one of the Impressionists, Manet’s work, which showed light by juxtaposing bright, contrasting colors, nonetheless greatly
inspired and influenced the generation of artists following him. Manet’s painting Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe (Luncheon on the Grass) (1863)—included in the Salon des Refusés in 1863, an exhibit of works rejected by the “official” Salon—was singled out for ridicule. The scandal surrounding this work resulted from its violation of the unwritten rule that the only appropriate nudes in contemporary art were classical figures or women in suitably exotic settings. In Luncheon on the Grass, Manet based his work on an engraving with a classical subject matter, but he showed contemporary clothed men with a nude woman as part of the group. This caused an uproar.

While Manet continued to submit his work to the Salon, other artists who disagreed with the rigid artistic standards espoused by the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and favored by the Salon set about establishing Impressionism as a new style. A work by Claude Monet (1840–1926) was the source of the movement’s name. Monet showed a work that he called Impression, Sunrise (1872), and the critics seized on this mere “impression” as a means by which to ridicule the movement. It was Monet who urged his fellow artists to work outdoors, and these endeavors were aided by technical advances in paint and brush production that made the medium more portable. Impressionist artists put their colors directly on the canvas with rapid strokes to capture the rapidly changing light. Scientific studies of vision and color led to the discovery that shadows were not merely gray but that they reflected the complementary color of the object casting them. Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) and Alfred Sisley (1839–99) were two other Impressionists of note.

POST-IMPRESSIONISM AND OTHER LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

The artists who followed Impressionism, though influenced by the earlier artists, took various features of Impressionism in quite different directions. The most influential of these artists was Paul Cézanne (1839–1906). Dissatisfied with the lack of solid form in Impressionist works, Cézanne set about redefining art in terms of form. He suggested that a painting could be structured as a series of planes with a clear foreground, middle ground, and background and argued that the objects in the painting could all be reduced to their simplest underlying forms—a cube, a sphere, or
van Gogh considered a place of vice, illustrate this very influential idea.

The search for intense light and clear color also marks the work of Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), who is perhaps known as much for the story of his life as he is for his art. Though he was a successful stockbroker, Gauguin left his wife and family while in his forties to pursue his art career. He worked for a short time with van Gogh in southern France but was still dissatisfied with his art. Searching for more intense color and a more “unschooled” style, he went to Tahiti, where he painted works that depict the island’s lush, tropical setting and native people, as seen through the lens of colonialism.

At this juncture, it is important to note the outside influences that were affecting the changing art world. The invention of the camera called into question the very need to capture ordinary reality in art. Some of the most important inventions may seem quite mundane. The invention of chemically based paints and the paint tube allowed the Impressionists to paint outdoors easily for the first time. This was also a time of global exploration and colonialism, and the objects brought back from around the world had a profound effect on the Impressionists and the artists who followed. Artists were intrigued by masks from Africa, and many collected the Japanese prints that were used as packing for shipments of goods from Japan. An Impressionist whose work exemplifies these new influences is Edgar Degas (1834–1917). Degas often combined the snapshot style of photography with a Japanese-like perspective from slightly above his subject.

In England, a group of artists dissatisfied with the effects of the Industrial Revolution banded together and became known as the Pre-Raphaelites. These artists created a style that attempted to return to the simpler forms of pre-Renaissance art. The Pre-Raphaelites created many quasi-religious works that often blended Romantic, archaic, and moralistic elements. Their emphasis on nature and sweeping curves paved the way for Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau, which became popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was a style of decoration, architecture, and design that was characterized by the depiction of leaves and flowers in flowing, sinuous lines.

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM

As we move into the twentieth century, we see artists who were continually striving to discover new ways of presenting their ideas. Furthering the attempts the Post-Impressionists had made to extend the boundaries of color, a group of artists led by Henri Matisse (1869–1954) used colors so
intense that they violated the sensibilities of critics and the public alike. Taking their cue from Van Gogh, these artists no longer thought their use of color needed to replicate color as seen in the real world. Their wild use of arbitrary color earned them the name of *fauves*, or “wild beasts.”

Natural form was to be attacked with equal fervor, as can be seen in developments in Paris around 1908. Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), in close collaboration with Georges Braque (1882–1963), was at work developing a whole new system of art. Picasso and Braque broke down and analyzed form in new ways in the style that came to be known as *Cubism*. Psychologists had explained that human experience is much richer than can be gathered from a traditional painting that shows a single view from a fixed vantage point. When we look at any given scene, we remember the scene as an overlay of visual impressions seen from different angles and moments in time. Picasso and Braque were familiar with these theories, as indicated by their habit of breaking figures up into multiple overlapping perspectives. The Cubists were also influenced by African art, which they imagined to be more intuitive and closer to nature than intellectualized European art. Cubist works reacted against the naturalistic, often sentimental, artworks that were popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Cubists favored abstract forms over lifelike figures.

In Germany, an art developed that emphasized emotional responses. A group of artists calling themselves *Die Brücke*, which included Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938) and Emil Nolde (1867–1956), took the brilliant arbitrary colors of the Fauvists and combined them with the intense feelings found in the work of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944). This highly charged attempt to make the inner workings of the mind visible in art is known as *Expressionism*. Another Expressionist group in Germany, *Der Blaue Reiter*, was led by the Russian artist Vasily Kandinsky (1866–1944), who around 1913 began to paint totally abstract pictures without any pictorial subject. Other pioneers of total *abstraction* were the Russian painter Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935) and the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), whose *De Stijl* canvases, consisting of flat fields of primary color, have become a hallmark of modern art.

The next events in our story of the history of art are important because they mark the beginnings of modern art in the United States. It was these beginnings, coupled with the effects of the First World War, that were partly responsible for the eventual shift of the center of the art world from Paris to New York. While the movements of modern art were sweeping Paris, the American scene remained largely unaffected until 1913. The *Armory Show*, arranged by the Barnes Foundation and held from February 17 through March 15, 1913, was the first major showing of modern art in the U.S., and it caused a sensation. Artworks that were to become landmarks of various European art movements were a part of the Armory Show, and they had a profound and lasting effect on American art. Marcel Duchamp’s (1887–1968) *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) and Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) both shocked viewers with their challenging approaches to the figure and space. Brancusi’s (1876–1957) *The Kiss*, with its abstracted, block-like figures, and Kandinsky’s non-objective paintings added to the outrage.

While the effects of the European works in the Armory Show rippled through the American art world, there was also a quintessentially American movement underway. During the 1920s, Harlem became a center for African-American creativity. Fueled by the popularity of jazz, writers and artists joined musicians in a flowering of the arts that is called the Harlem Renaissance. Though the movement lasted only a decade, it was an inspiration to many artists, including Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and other well-known artists of the next generation.

During World War I and its aftermath, another movement arose that challenged established ideas about art. This
During World War II, organized movements in art came and gave it an insulting title (Mona Lisa). Marcel Duchamp created two works that have come to represent this amusing and irreverent view of the world. He added a mustache to a reproduction of the Mona Lisa and gave it an insulting title (LHOOQ, 1919), and he also exhibited a common porcelain urinal (Fountain, 1917).

Duchamp, in fact, invented a new category of artworks that he referred to as ready-mades. By taking an ordinary object and giving it a new context, Duchamp would create a work of art. In this way, Duchamp challenged traditional ideas about the way the artist functions—rather than physically making a work of art, an object became a work of art merely through the artist’s choice. Picasso created several works that may also be considered ready-mades. For example, in a famous work Picasso took an ordinary object—bicycle handlebars—and made them appear as bull horns when coupled with a bicycle seat (Bull’s Head, 1943).

Some artists, influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud, attempted to portray the inner workings of the mind in their artworks. This group of artists became known as the Surrealists and included artists such as Salvador Dalí (1904–89), René Magritte (1898–1967), and Joan Miró (1893–1983).

One of the most influential events in the history of art took place in Germany between the first and second world wars. A school of design called the Bauhaus—a name that would become a byword of modern design—established standards for architecture and design that would have a profound influence on the world of art. The Bauhaus made a bold attempt to reconcile industrial mass-manufacture with aesthetic form. Taking the view that form should follow function and should be true to the materials used, the faculty at the Bauhaus designed a curriculum that continues to influence many contemporary schools of art. After the school was closed by the Nazis in 1933, many of the Bauhaus’ faculty, including Josef Albers (1888–1976), a well-known painter, graphic artist, and designer, came to the United States and continued to teach. We can still recognize the Bauhaus influence in our contemporary society with its streamlined furnishings and buildings.

**ABSTRACTION**

During World War II, organized movements in art came to a virtual standstill. Art was produced, but attention was really on the war. Many artists did in fact serve in the military, and often art was designed to serve as propaganda in support of the war effort. When the war was over and Europe was recovering, a new center for the international art world emerged. The action had shifted to New York, and it would be decades before the artistic centers in England, France, Italy, and Germany would regain something that approximated the prominence of New York.

During the 1950s the art scene in New York was dominated by the ideas and writings of critics such as Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg. These critics had a tremendous influence on the development of art styles. Greenberg chose to promote a particular view of art and was an advocate for artists who were further developing abstraction. Beginning in the 1940s, Abstract Expressionist artists followed Kandinsky’s dictum that art, like music, could be free from the limitations of pictorial subject matter. These artists aimed at the direct presentation of feeling with an emphasis on dramatic colors and sweeping brushstrokes. The Abstract Expressionist movement, which included the artists Willem de Kooning (1904–97), Lee Krasner (1908–84), and Franz Kline (1910–62), reached its pinnacle with the work of Jackson Pollock (1912–56). Pollock eventually abandoned even the use of his paintbrush and instead dripped his paint directly onto the canvas.

Abstract Expressionist works tended to fall into two types: Action Painting, which employed dramatic brushstrokes or Pollock’s innovative dripping technique, or Color Field paintings, which featured broad areas of color and simple, often geometric forms. Mark Rothko and Josef Albers are two well-known color field artists.

In response to the non-objective style of Abstract Expressionism, other artists began to return to naturalism, producing works that, though they may appear in some ways similar to those of the abstractionists, focused on ordinary consumer objects. Jasper Johns (b. 1930) created a series of works that featured common things such as flags, numbers, maps, and letters. Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) created sculptures from the cast-off objects he found around him to create what he called “combines.” He hung his own bedclothes on the wall like a canvas and painted them [Bed (1955)], and one of his most famous works, Monogram (1959), consists of numerous “found” items, including a stuffed goat, a tire, a police barrier, the heel of a shoe, a tennis ball, and paint. This use of everyday objects in artistic works had a decided influence on the next
big movement in art—Pop Art.

**POP ART, MINIMALISM, AND PHOTOREALISM**

1960s Pop Art, with its incorporation of images of mass culture, violated the traditional unspoken rules regarding what was appropriate subject matter for art. Andy Warhol (1928–87), the icon of pop art, achieved the kind of popularity usually reserved for rock stars. His soup cans, Brillo boxes, and images of movie stars were created with a factory-like silkscreen approach that he used to mock the art world. Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97), another pop artist, adopted the imagery of comic books and recreated them on such a large scale that the pattern of dots used to print them was made massive. Robert Indiana (b. 1928) used stencils that had been originally used to produce commercial signs to create his own artistic messages.

Minimalism sought to reduce art to its barest essentials, emphasizing simplification of form and often featuring monochromatic palettes. The invention of acrylic paint and the airbrush enabled Minimalist painters to achieve very precise outlines, which resulted in the term “hard-edge painting.” The artist who is best known for these large, entirely non-objective paintings is Frank Stella (b. 1936). The sculptors David Smith (1906–65), who used stainless steel, and Dan Flavin (1933–96), who used neon tubing, also created large pieces that reflected this abstract minimalist sensibility.

A Pop-inspired group of artists began to produce works that aimed to create a kind of super-realism or what came to be called Photorealism. In these works, a hyper-real quality results from the depiction of the subject matter in sharp focus, as in a photograph. This technique offered a clear contrast to the use of sfumato, developed in the Renaissance, which had added a haziness to the contour of painted objects. Photorealist artists Chuck Close (b. 1940), with his portraits, and Duane Hanson (1925–1996), with his witty sculptures of ordinary people, hearkened back to the Realism promoted by Gustave Courbet.

**EARTHWORKS, INSTALLATIONS, AND PERFORMANCE**

One intriguing development in the contemporary art world since the 1970s is that art is no longer limited to gallery or museum spaces, and many important works of art are departures from traditional formats. Some artists have taken their work to a new scale and have developed their artworks in new venues, often out of doors. In this way, artists also challenge conventional ideas about art and its function. An artist known by the single name Christo (b. 1935), working together with his partner Jeanne-Claude (1935–2009), is responsible for creating much interest in these kinds of Earthworks (also known as Land art or Environmental art). Beginning in Europe, Christo startled the world with the idea that landscape or architecture is something that can be packaged. He wrapped several well-known monuments in fabric, built a twenty-four-mile-long cloth fence in California, surrounded eleven Florida islands with pink plastic, and set up orange fabric gates on pathways throughout Central Park. These works, which require years and even decades of preparation, are as much about the process as they are about the finished product, and it is for this reason that Christo’s partner, Jeanne-Claude, played such an important role. While Christo designs the projects, Jeanne-Claude handled many of the logistical details that must be addressed to carry out the work. Their partnership raises important questions about the concept of the individual genius of the artist and how he or she works. Other artists associated with Earthworks are Michael Heizer (b. 1944) and Robert Smithson (1938–73).

The growth of Performance Art is another development that allows artistic expression to transcend traditional boundaries. Some artists work in conventional media such as photography and painting, as well as in performance art. Performance art is a combination of theater and art in which the artists themselves become the work. Such works exist in time, like music or theater, and are fleeting and transitory in nature. The point is to create a real event in which the audience can participate, but that does not result in a fixed, marketable artwork for a museum or living room wall. Sometimes performance art is socially conscious in its intent. An example is the Guerrilla Girls, a group of New...
York-based artists who began to work together in 1985. The individual identities of the artists in this all-female group are kept anonymous at all times. The artists even wear gorilla masks when they appear in public to conceal their identities. The artists use guerrilla-warfare tactics, such as pasting up posters and flyers, as well as giving public speeches, to challenge what they see as an art world dominated by white men.

**Postmodernist** art arose in reaction to the modernist styles, and not surprisingly, it takes many forms across a variety of media. Postmodern works tend to reintroduce traditional elements or to exaggerate modernist techniques by using them to the extreme. Postmodern works often return to earlier styles, periods, and references and often question the mores and beliefs of contemporary society. A leading proponent of Postmodernism in architecture is Philip Johnson (1906–2005), who at one time was known as one of the leading modern architects of the International Style. For decades, architecture had largely been dominated by the Bauhaus idea of form following function, and sleek towers of steel sheathed in glass were the standard for large buildings. But, in 1970, Johnson suggested the radical idea that one of the functions of art was decoration, and with the AT&T (now Sony) Building (1984), he added a finial to the top of the standard office tower.

Today, artists around the world work in an endless variety of media and styles. One can no longer say that any particular city, country, or even continent is the “center” of the art world. The next section of this guide provides a brief overview of “nonwestern” art, but we should note that the categories of Western and nonwestern in the world of contemporary art are becoming obsolete with the emergence of transnational artists in an increasingly mobile and interconnected world.

**BRIEF OVERVIEW OF NONWESTERN ART**

The story of art that we have been studying thus far has been a traditional one and has been told over and over again by countless writers since Giorgio Vasari’s time. It chronicles a history of Western European ideas that grew out of the concepts put forth by early Greek philosophers. These ideas experienced a revival during the Renaissance and were further refined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Atomic power, the increasing pace of technological inventions, and the electronic age further expanded and changed the realm of art in the twentieth century.

We should keep in mind that the history we have chronicled thus far, though valuable, has clear limitations. In recent decades, art history, like many other academic disciplines, has been challenged to include artists and works that were previously marginalized. The influence of feminist critics in particular has led to major revisions, and there has also been an increasing inclusion of the histories of art of other cultures. At this point, we will look at the arts of Asia, Africa, Oceania, the Americas, and the art of Islam throughout the world. The art histories of these cultures are increasingly central to the development of the discipline of art history. Of course, this brief survey covers only a tiny fraction of the rich world of art beyond the boundaries of the Western world. The works considered here might be categorized as “traditional”; contemporary art from Asia and Africa, thoroughly immersed in the global art scene, is beyond the scope of this discussion, for example. Illustrations of the works of art discussed here can be found through basic Internet searches and in standard art historical textbooks.

**ASIAN ART**

**Chinese Art**

Civilization and art have been present in China for thousands of years, and some archaeological finds in China rival those in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Remains of painted wares have been found that date back to the fourth millennium BCE. Perhaps the most famous work of ancient Chinese art is the Great Wall, which was constructed over the course of centuries and covers thousands of miles. Of course this wall, now considered an enduring work of art and admired both for its engineering and aesthetic appeal, originally had a utilitarian function. This is an example of how meaning and function can change over time. In fact, many of the works we will examine here were created for a specific purpose but are now seen as works of art in a different context.

The dynasties or kingdoms that ruled for long periods of time had an impact on the history of art in China. In many cases, these rulers left elaborate tombs that contained many objects that have become great treasures of art. One of the most amazing works from the early period of Chinese art history is the monument to the first emperor to unite the kingdom—the Emperor of Qin (c.210 BCE). He had a full army of soldiers and their equipment, including their horses, created life-size in clay and buried as part of his tomb. The technical ability demonstrated in these sculptures and the life-like detail of the soldiers and their horses are quite astonishing. The dynasties succeeding Qin built grand walled cities with huge palaces and tombs. These dynasties are noted for bronze statues and ceremonial vessels. These
vessels are covered with intricate designs, and the methods of casting are still not completely understood.

The introduction of Buddhism from India had a profound effect on Chinese arts and culture. During the reign of the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), often referred to as China’s Golden Age, artists produced some of the greatest works of ceramic sculpture ever made. Traditional Chinese art also placed great value on ink drawings. Many scrolls are meant for contemplation, and this contemplative aspect is a feature often associated with Asian art. Chinese traditions in writing, painting, and sculpture were maintained over the centuries. With the communist revolution that established the People’s Republic of China in 1949, art became suffused with political ideas and was often an instrument of propaganda. However, since the late 1970s, Chinese art has gradually become less political.

**Indian Art**

India is an extremely diverse nation in which more than 1,600 different languages and dialects are currently spoken, and India is home to a variety of religious and cultural traditions. India’s artistic traditions are among the oldest in the world, and here we will only be able to touch on one or two aspects of India’s rich artistic heritage. The influence of Buddhist traditions is strong, of course, but what often astonishes people unfamiliar with the art of India is the influence of Greek art on the classical images of Buddha. India has ruins of great early civilizations that rival those of Egypt and Mesoamerica, and the sensuous style of Indian sculptures has had an enduring impact on art over the centuries. Much Indian art reflects the tremendous influence of Hinduism. This religion, with its many gods and goddesses, gave rise to a lovely, lively, and sinuous style. Images of Shiva, who dances gracefully with his multiple arms, are particularly striking.

**Japanese Art**

The island kingdom of Japan, though tiny in size, has had a great influence on the international art world. Japan was closed to the West for the majority of its history, and this allowed Japanese art to remain relatively consistent and
traditional. As with China, the history of Japan is one of succeeding dynasties, with each one leaving its mark in a series of succeeding styles. Also, as with China, Buddhism was imported to Japan and became an important focus in the traditional arts. The strength of Japan’s artistic traditions remained even when the country became more open to Western cultures. During the rise of the Impressionist movement in Europe, Japan sent a group of artists to study in France. These artists returned to Japan and introduced the ideas they had encountered in the West, and so, for a short time at the end of the nineteenth century, there was a group of artists in Japan who used linear perspective and the colors and subjects of Impressionism. However, what is noteworthy is that the Japanese soon rejected these ideas and returned to the isometric perspective and flat areas of color favored by Japanese traditions. Although Japanese artists created excellent works in painting, architecture, crafts, and sculpture, it is for their printmaking that Japanese artists are best known in the Western world. Japanese prints had a profound influence on Western art, as French artists began to imitate the prints that they began to collect in the late nineteenth century. The flat colors and overhead viewpoint of these prints were adopted by many French artists during this period.

AFRICAN AND OCEANIC ART

Some of the historic traditions of African art have already been discussed in our survey of Western art. As a result of the relationships between Egypt and the Mediterranean world, the ancient arts of northern Africa are often incorporated into the history of Western art. Usually the art of sub-Saharan Africa is treated separately from that of northern Africa because of the regions’ very different histories. A close look at all areas of the continent reveals that impressive art traditions emerged in west, central, east, and southern Africa quite early. Some of the oldest examples are cave paintings in what is now Namibia. In West Africa, the Nok civilization flourished from c. 900 BCE to 200 CE. Located in what is present-day Nigeria, this impressive civilization produced fantastically life-like terracotta sculptures, many of which were probably portraits of political and religious leaders. It is possible that the early Nok civilization had an influence on later cultural groups such as the Yoruba.

Another important historical tradition from Nigeria relates to the Benin Kingdom, which first emerged around 900 CE when the Edo people settled in the area. The kingdom became further consolidated with shifts in leadership in the eleventh century. Much of the remaining art from the Benin Kingdom was produced in association with a rich life at the royal court. Cast bronze portrait heads were intended for ancestral altars, and a variety of objects were made to reinforce the tremendous power of the oba, or Benin king. Countless treasures from the Benin Kingdom were destroyed or confiscated by the British in the 1897 raid on the royal palace. As a result, many more of these objects from historic Benin can be found in museums in Europe and the United States than in Nigeria.
While art objects in a variety of media have been created by many different African cultural groups, our study of them has been limited in many cases by the lack of necessary conditions for preservation. While there are some objects in metal and clay, the use of fiber and wood, which are quite perishable, has resulted in relatively few artifacts being preserved. Unfortunately, much African art was also destroyed by early European traders and colonial settlers on the continent. Westerners often viewed much of what they found in Africa as dangerous and threatening to the colonial pursuit, perceiving artworks as pagan symbols that should be destroyed rather than preserved. Hence, a wealth of cultural artifacts has been lost. The objects that were preserved were often collected as archaeological artifacts and, in most cases, important contextual information was lost. It is only relatively recently that art historians have begun to explore the rich variety of artworks and aesthetic systems of African cultures. In many cases, traditional African arts challenge the Western concept of art for art’s sake—functional baskets, ceramics, and textiles, for example, are some of the most prized material objects for many African cultural groups.

When we look at African art in a museum, a great deal of contextual information that is crucial to our understanding of the object is lost. Many African cultural groups, such as the Dan and the Bwa, are well-known for their impressive masks. Masks, though, are not meant to be seen in isolation as they are typically displayed when in art museums. Instead, masks are usually integrated into performance, coupled with a full-body costume and accompanied by music, dance, jokes, festivities, and a great meal shared with friends and family. It is difficult, of course, to recreate all of this in a museum context!

Similar issues occur in relation to the arts of Oceania. Oceania is the collective name for the thousands of islands that constitute Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. As is the case with Africa, many perishable objects dating back for centuries have been lost to us due to the use of fragile materials in a sometimes hostile climate. In Polynesia, tattooing and other body arts were important ways of expressing social stature. Clearly these art forms are lost with the death of the tattooed person and were preserved only through engravings made by visitors to the islands prior to the invention of photography.

Some of the most important art traditions of the Asmat cultural group of Melanesia relate to warfare. Traditionally the Asmat engaged in head-hunting practices, but these traditions have died out. Enormous carved wooden shields decorated with beautiful black, red, and white abstract patterns were traditionally used for protection in raids among groups throughout the area; today these shields are seen as cultural symbols, but they no longer serve the same function in war.

Carved masks were a central part of Melanesian cultures. In many cases, these masks were used in ceremonies that involved summoning the spirits of ancestors to honor the dead. As is the case with African art traditions, much is lost when these objects are viewed in museum collections.

Rich traditions continue to develop throughout Oceania today, especially as groups such as the Maori of New Zealand seek cultural renewal by reviving old traditions in a new context. Many people from traditional cultural groups that have been threatened by colonization recognize that art offers vibrant possibilities for expressing and reinforcing cultural identity.

**ISLAMIC ART**

Today, Islam is a major religion that is not limited to any one region of the world. However, historically Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula following the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (c. 570–632). The revelations of Muhammad are recorded in Islam’s holy book, the Koran. This text plays a central role in the practice of Islam, and some of the most valued art objects are beautifully produced copies of the Koran or containers that hold the sacred text. Following the Koran’s scriptures, Islamic art is largely non-figurative. Abstract or calligraphic decoration can be found on most Islamic art objects, including sacred architecture which has a long history in the Islamic tradition. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (687–692) is one of the oldest examples of Islamic architecture. Its position in Jerusalem marks the presence of Islam in a city that is also sacred to Jews and Christians. The act of prayer is central to the practice of Islam, and the mosque, with its qibla wall facing toward Mecca, emerged as a site for communal prayer. Mosque architecture can be found in a variety of forms throughout the world today.

**THE AMERICAS**

For many years art historians classified much of the art of North and South America as products of simple craftsmanship. These artifacts were not truly considered works of art and therefore were kept solely in archeological and anthropological museums. However, renewed interest and new studies of these works have added considerably to our understanding and appreciation of the art of the first Americans, and objects from these cultures are becoming
more and more common in the collections of art museums. Great civilizations grew and flourished in the Americas, including the Olmec, Toltec, Maya, Inca, and Aztec. Great pyramids, rivaling those of Egypt, rose as the central features of large cities, of which the Pyramid of the Sun in Mexico is one of the best known. The decorative carvings on the Mayan ruins continue to amaze us, and in addition to architectural marvels, statues in clay and stone, as well as fine textiles and jewelry, remain as reminders of the glories of these civilizations.

While there is evidence of early people in many areas of present-day Canada and the United States dating back nearly 12,000 years, several of the conditions that we identified earlier as being necessary for preservation were not present. As a result, the majority of artifacts from these cultures are only from the last two thousand years. During the later centuries of the prehistoric period, the Native Americans of the Southwest demonstrated remarkable architectural skills in the building of pueblo complexes. These dwellings often consisted of well over a hundred rooms laid out in multiple stories.

**ELEMENTS OF ART**

**FORMAL QUALITIES OF ART**

While it is crucial to examine any given work of art in its historical context in order to arrive at an understanding of its meaning, it is also important to focus intently on the formal qualities or the basic visual components of a work of art. These include **line**, **shape**, **form**, **space**, **color**, and **texture**, among other things. Formal analysis requires careful observation and description, often using the special vocabulary of art.
Line

Line is the most basic of art elements. Any kind of mark-making tool—a finger, pencil, paint, etc.—can be used to create a line on a surface. The strict definition of a line is the path of a point moving through space. But beyond this technical definition, lines have a variety of characteristics such as length, width, and direction. Lines may appear hard or soft, bold or indistinct, uniform or varying in width. Sometimes lines are not solid but consist of a series of interrupted dots or lines that the eye connects to create an implied line. Think of prints in the sand or snow that imply the path of a person or animal. Sometimes we see the edges of objects as lines. The corners of rooms, the edges of doors, and the line where two colors meet all provide examples of how edges may be seen as lines.

Artists use lines to express ideas or feelings visually. Horizontal and vertical lines create a stable and static feeling. Vertical lines cause the eye to move upward. Medieval churches were created with very high arched ceilings, designed to raise the eyes of the people upward toward heaven to promote a feeling of spiritual awe. Horizontal lines, such as the line of the horizon, suggest a feeling of peace and tranquility while curving and jagged lines create a sense of activity. Though the use of lines is perhaps most essential and noticeable in drawing and some kinds of printmaking, all artists use line in their artwork in some way.

Shape and Form

Shape and form are two elements of art that are closely related to one another. Shape is what defines the two-dimensional area of an object, whereas forms are objects that are three-dimensional, having length, width, and depth. For example, a square is a shape, but a cube is a form. A triangle is a shape; a pyramid or a cone is a form. When one draws an apple that in nature is a form, one draws a shape that represents the apple. If one creates an apple out of clay, that clay apple is a form. In a two-dimensional artwork, an artist may try to create the illusion of form through the use of shading, foreshortening, perspective, and other techniques.

Shapes and forms may be geometric, such as circles/spheres and squares/cubes. These geometric shapes and forms can be defined mathematically and are precise and regular. Some shapes and forms are described as being “organic” since living things tend to be freeform and irregular in shape or form. A geometric shape or form can convey a sense of order and stability, while organic shapes and forms tend to express movement and rhythm.

Space is an element of art related to the organization of objects and the areas around them. The objects, shapes, or forms in an artwork occupy what is termed positive space. Sometimes these objects, shapes, or forms may be called the figure. The area around these objects, shapes, or forms represents negative space. In three-dimensional forms, negative space may surround the forms or may be created as a result of open spaces within the forms. Three-dimensional artworks include, among other forms, architecture, ceramic objects, and sculpture. The two primary types of sculpture are freestanding, or fully in the round, and relief, meaning that the sculpture projects from a surface or background of which it is a part. Such sculptures may be in high relief—projecting boldly from the surface—or bas (low) relief—projecting only slightly from the surface of the sculpture.

Perspective

The creation of perspective or the illusion of depth is another important use of space in two-dimensional artworks. There are many effective techniques that artists can use to create an illusion of three-dimensionality. They may use shading and highlighting on the contours—the visible borders—of objects to replicate the manner in which light shining on objects lends those objects a sense of volume and space. An artist can also create a sense of depth in an artwork by placing objects or figures lower on the picture plane to make them appear closer to the viewer. Or, one can do the reverse and place objects and figures higher on the plane to make them appear farther away from the viewer. Artists can also manipulate the size of objects to create a sense of perspective—larger objects will appear closer to the viewer than smaller objects. An artist can also have closer objects overlap objects that are farther away to indicate depth and distance. Moreover, the artist can make objects appear closer to the viewer by giving them greater detail than objects that are farther away—replicating the manner in which our eyes are able to perceive more detail in objects that are nearer to us.

Aerial perspective, also called atmospheric perspective, is a technique that takes into account the ways that fog, smoke, and airborne particles change the appearance of things when they are viewed from a distance. When an artist uses this technique, objects that are farther away will appear lighter and more neutral in color and will lack contrast of color or value.
Frequently, when we think of perspective, we think of the mathematical techniques that were developed during the Renaissance which can be used to create the illusion of space. Such techniques create what is called linear perspective because this perspective is founded on the visual phenomenon that as lines recede into the distance, they appear to converge and eventually vanish at a point on the horizon. We may, for example, notice this effect when viewing highways, railroads, or fence posts as they stretch into the distance. In employing linear perspective, the artist establishes one or more vanishing points on the real or imagined horizon of the artwork. Then, lines are carefully drawn to ensure a precise and extremely realistic depiction of interior and exterior scenes. Thus, in drawing a black and white checkerboard floor (a frequent feature in Renaissance interior paintings), the horizontal lines of the tiles are drawn as parallel, but the vertical lines—which we know are also parallel in reality—appear to converge or come together in a systematic way as they recede toward the back wall of the interior.

Color

Color surrounds us wherever we go and is a compelling element in art. **Hue** is simply the name of the color. There are three primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—from which all other colors are produced. Secondary colors are formed from the mixture of two primary colors: red and yellow make orange; yellow and blue make green; blue and red make violet. There are six tertiary colors, made by combining a primary and an adjacent secondary color: red and violet make red-violet; violet and blue make violet-blue; blue and green make blue-green; green and yellow make yellow-green; yellow and orange make yellow-orange; orange and red make red-orange. The organization of these hues into a visual scheme, known as the **color wheel**, dates from the eighteenth century, though the underlying concepts were developed by Sir Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century. The color wheel is a useful tool for predicting the results of mixing hues.

Two important variables affecting color are the amount of light that is reflected and the purity of the color. The term **“value”** is often used when discussing the lightness or darkness of a color or of gray. Values in an artwork may be primarily dark or primarily light or may be contrasting from dark to light. The artist’s use of value contributes to the expressive quality of the artwork. In mixing colors, artists create a lighter hue by adding white to the color. Adding white to red, for example, makes a lighter red or...
pink. Artists create darker hues by adding black to the color. Adding black to red, for example, makes a dark red. A few words about black and white are necessary at this point. Black and white are not hues; they are called neutrals. When mixing black and white, artists can create a continuum of grays.

**Intensity** refers to the brightness or purity of a color. The unmixed primary colors, being pure in color, are generally considered to be the most intense colors. If pure colors are mixed, they become less intense. Adding black or gray to a color will reduce its intensity. Adding a color to its complement lowers the intensity of the color, making it more dull or neutral in tone. Equal parts of two complements, such as red and green, will produce a dull, muddy brown tone.

Artists often use specific color schemes to produce particular visual or emotional effects. In the nineteenth century, scientists discovered the relativity of color; they determined that a given shade of red will look brighter or darker, more or less intense, depending on what other (similar or contrasting) colors are placed next to it. Thus, colors do not have a fixed or immutable character or value.

In discussing art and color, we often speak of warm colors and cool colors. These color associations are culturally constructed and are not absolute. In the context of Western art, warm colors include red, orange, and yellow and are referred to as such because we associate them with the warmth of the sun, the heat of a roaring fire, or the dry grass of a late summer day. Cool colors—green, blue, and violet—remind us of cool forests, mountain lakes, and snow. Artists often use warm and cool colors to create space in artworks. Warm colors seem to advance toward the viewer while cool colors appear to recede. By employing contrasts of warm and cool colors, artists can create a sense of movement as the viewer’s eyes move over the surface of the artwork.

Color may be local, arbitrary, or optical. **Local color** refers to the “true” color of an object or area as seen in normal daylight, irrespective of the effects of distance or reflections from other objects. For instance, in a work using local color, a grassy field would be green despite the fact that it may, in reality, appear bluish from a distance. **Optical color** refers to the effect that special lighting has on the color of objects. Consider how colors change in moonlight, at daybreak, in candlelight, or in artificial lighting. Artists who use arbitrary color choose colors for their emotional or aesthetic impact. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists have come to use arbitrary color schemes more and more often.

**Texture**

Texture refers to how things feel or how we think they would feel if touched. From a young age we explore the surfaces of things and store away these tactile experiences in our memory. When we see new objects or artworks, we call upon our previous experiences to determine the quality of the surface texture. In the context of art, we make reference to two kinds of texture: actual and visual. Some artists use actual textures in their art. For example, a ceramic artist may create an actual texture on the surface of a pot or plate. In collages, assemblages, or masks, artists may use yarn, rope, shiny paper, shells, and other natural or manufactured materials to create actual textural effects. Artists who work in three-dimensional media exploit the textural qualities of their chosen material whether it is stone, wood, metal, or some other substance.

Artists who work in two-dimensional media create visual texture—an illusion of a textured surface—in their artwork. For example, an artist may wish to simulate the actual texture of a straw hat, a glass vase, or an orange. Textures may be created by using patterns of lines or shapes that suggest texture. An artist can use the contrast of light and dark on a surface to create a texture that appears rough. Conversely, the absence of such a contrast will evoke a smooth texture. Shiny surfaces appear to reflect light while matte surfaces appear soft and dull. In addition to using the aforementioned techniques to create visual texture, painters can create actual texture with their brushstrokes.

**Composition**

**Composition** refers to the artist’s organization of the elements of art, whether in two- or three-dimensional works. When speaking of a painting, the composition refers to the arrangement of these elements on the picture plane. In the case of architecture, composition is a word used to describe the organization of these elements in space.

**Rhythm** is the principle that we associate with movement or pattern. Artists create a sense of movement or rhythm in their artwork through the repetition of elements such as line, shape, color, and texture. The rhythm of a composition can cause the viewer’s eye to move rhythmically across and around the composition. Some rhythms flow smoothly, while others are more jarring. The artist directs the movement of our eye through the use of repeated elements.

**Motif** and **pattern** are two aspects of repetition. A motif is a single element of a pattern. For example, in a quilt design, one or more motifs are repeated to create an overall pattern.
A pattern involves the repetition of certain elements—color or line—or motifs within a work of art. Many patterns feature regular repetition. Shapes or motifs may be repeated in a number of ways to create regular patterns. Some kind of grid system will underlie a regular pattern. Checkerboards offer an example of a regular pattern.

**Balance** refers to the equal distribution of visual weight in a work of art. There are a number of techniques that artists use to create balance. The easiest to comprehend is symmetrical balance—a balance achieved when elements of the composition are repeated exactly on both sides of the central axis. If you fold a paper in half vertically and one side of the centerfold is a mirror image of the other side of the centerfold, then you have an example of symmetrical balance. Many formal styles of architecture make use of symmetry with columns, wings, and windows arrayed equally on either side of the central entrance. Artworks in which the central axis is horizontal and equal visual weight is placed above and below that axis also exhibit symmetrical balance. To avoid the rigidity and monotony that may accompany a symmetrical composition, many artists employ approximate symmetry. In this kind of balance, shapes or objects are slightly varied on either side of the central axis. The artist may also include variations in the color, detail, or position of the shapes to achieve this effect.

**Asymmetrical balance** is a visual balance that is achieved through the organization of unlike objects. Even though asymmetrical balance may appear to be more informal than symmetrical balance, it is actually a more complex compositional task. There are several ways that asymmetrical balance can be achieved. The first is by the position of objects. Think of two people of unequal weight on a seesaw. To maintain a balance, the lighter person must sit far out on the end of the seesaw while the heavier person must sit close to the fulcrum. Similarly, an artist may create balance by placing the heavier, more solid object close to the center of the artwork while placing smaller objects farther away from the center.

Contrast of color, value, shape, size, line, or texture creates interest to the eye. An element that contrasts with the rest of a composition will create a focal point where the eye tends to rest. This focal point appears more dominant, more important than other parts of the composition. In this way, the artist may guide the viewer to an understanding of meaning.

**Proportion** refers to the size relationships among the parts of a composition. Our sense of proportion is based upon our human scale. **Scale** refers to the dimensional relation of the parts of a work to the work in its entirety, and can refer to the overall size of an artwork. Size attracts our interest. The vast scale of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel creates a sense of awe. The detail of a tiny painting or of illuminations in medieval manuscripts intrigues us. Artists consider the purpose and place of their art when determining the appropriate scale for the work.

Scale also refers to the relative size of elements within the artwork. In a naturalistic work, we expect that the relative sizes of the objects depicted will appear as they actually are in life. In some cases, artists intentionally make one person or object in their composition larger to draw our attention to that person or object.

When representing the human face and figure realistically, artists strive to use accurate proportions. The standards for the relationship of the various parts of the human face and body were established nearly 2,500 years ago during the Classical Period of Greek sculpture. The Greeks believed that the human figure was the measure of all things. As a consequence, all structures were designed in proportions relative to human proportions, and specific rules were established. For example, the ideal human figure was determined to be seven and one-half heads high. The features of the human face could be correctly placed according to these rules: the corners of the eyes fall on a line halfway between the chin and the top of the head, the bottom of the nose falls halfway between the chin and the corners of the eyes, and the bottom of the lips falls halfway between the chin and the bottom of the nose. However, many artists at different times have altered these proportions to reflect changing ideals of beauty. At other times, artists have exaggerated or distorted proportions for an expressive effect.

To truly understand how artists manipulate the elements of art and the principles of composition, it is necessary to examine a great many artworks and to analyze how artists create meaning in their artwork through skillful choices and the application of these artistic concepts. Students should keep in mind that many of the elements discussed in the principles of composition section of this guide are more often found in traditional works than in modern artworks. The rejection of notions such as unity and balance is often the very essence of much modern art.

**PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES**

Two-dimensional art processes and techniques are those that are created on a flat plane. They have height and width, but not significant depth. These include drawing,
printmaking, painting, photography, and some mixed media. Artworks that have depth as well as height and width and that exist in space are three dimensional. This category includes sculpture, other works in mixed media, and environmental art.

**DRAWING**

Drawing is arguably the most basic of art processes. Most of us have been drawing since we could hold some tool and make marks on a surface. The most common drawing media are pencil, pen and ink, charcoal, crayon, and felt-tip pens. Artists can choose from a variety of surfaces upon which to draw. Early artists used walls of rock, and though some artists today continue to draw on walls, most use some kind of paper—from the white paper of common sketchbooks to a wide variety of manufactured and handmade papers. Papers may be smooth or rough, white or in a wide range of colors. Drawing tools may be black, colored, or white.

Drawing is primarily based on the use of line. Lines created by drawing media can vary dramatically in quality. Hard pencils will make thin, light lines while soft pencils will make thicker lines that may vary considerably in value from lighter to very dark. Charcoal is so soft that the color of the paper used will show through in places where the strokes are applied lightly. Each drawing tool or medium has its own unique qualities, and experimenting with a variety of drawing media is a good way to gain an understanding of their similarities and differences.

With drawing pencils or charcoals, a change in pressure will cause a change in value. More pressure creates darker values; lighter pressure creates lighter values. **Shading** can also be used to change values. Artists use the techniques of **hatching** and **crosshatching** to shade objects and create an illusion of three-dimensionality. Hatching consists of placing lines closely side by side. Crosshatching is a process in which lines are crisscrossed.
to create shading. Many drawing media can be blended to change their value and enhance shading. Another technique for shading is stippling. With this technique, the artist creates different values by making a pattern of dots. The distance between the dots determines how dark the shading will be—the more densely clustered the dots, the darker the shading.

When an artist uses ink as a drawing medium, the ink can be thinned to create a wash of lighter value in which the paper shows through to lighten the effect. Undiluted ink is opaque; it is not transparent, and it completely covers the underlying paper. But water can be added to make the ink translucent.

Color may be introduced into a drawing with the use of pastels or colored pencils. The same techniques used with black media are used with colored media. The artist using color must consider the effects of color and line in an artwork. Colored pastels became popular in the 1700s. These soft sticks of color can be readily blended to create delicate tints and shades, and they are particularly popular for portraiture. The major drawback of pastels is that they are very fragile, and pastel drawings must be cared for quite gently. Often, the surface of a pastel drawing is sprayed with a fixative to reduce the risk of smearing. Colored pencils are more durable than pastels, but like pastels, they may be layered to create blended colors.

**PRINTMAKING**

Printmaking refers to a group of mechanically aided two-dimensional processes that permit the production of multiple original artworks. The principal printmaking processes include relief prints, intaglio prints, lithographs, and screen prints. All of these processes use some sort of printing plate (a “matrix”) on which an image is created. Ink is applied to the plate, and the image is transferred to paper or another material.

In relief printmaking, the artist cuts away parts from the surface of the plate. The matrix may be made of wood, linoleum, or a synthetic material, and a number of tools, including woodcarving or linoleum knives and gouges, can be used for cutting its surface. Once the plate has been cut, the remaining parts will stand out in relief. The relief sections may range from thin lines to broad fields, and it is these areas, when they are inked, that will produce the image. Wherever part of the plate is removed, the original color of the paper being printed upon remains. Ink is rolled over the surface of the plate with a brayer, and paper is placed over the inked plate. The plate and paper are then put into a press or rubbed with a burnisher to force the ink onto the paper.

**Intaglio printmaking** works in the opposite manner from relief printmaking. In the intaglio process, lines are incised on the wood or soft metal plate. Line is an essential element in the intaglio process. Carving tools are used to cut lines into the surface of the plate in a process called engraving. Another intaglio process is etching. In this process, the design is incised through a layer of wax or varnish applied to the surface of a metal plate. After the incising, the plate is immersed in acid, which etches, or eats away, the exposed metal. Leaving the plate in the acid for a shorter time will make faint lines in the plate, while leaving the plate in for a longer time will make deeper grooves. After the plate is etched, the remaining wax or varnish is removed, and ink is forced into the etched areas of the warmed plate. Then, the ink on the surface of the plate is wiped off, and finally, paper is placed on the plate, and it is passed through a heavy press. The paper is forced into the etched, inked areas, and the ink transfers to the paper. In an etching, the printing process causes the printed areas to actually rise above the surface of the paper, giving a degree of dimension to the print.

**Lithography** is a process in which the image is drawn with a waxy pencil or crayon directly on a plate, which can be made of stone, zinc, or aluminum. The greasy image is hardened, and the plate is saturated with water. Then, ink is applied. The ink adheres only to the greasy image since oil resists water. The image is picked up on the paper when the plate is moved through a press. Lithography can be a complex and demanding process, but in contrast to woodcut and engraving, it does not require special professional training; anyone who can draw can make a lithograph.

Screen prints are familiar to most of us since this is the process used to print most T-shirts. In the silk-screening process, a photograph or other image is transferred or adhered to a silk or synthetic fabric that has been stretched onto a frame. The image serves as a sort of stencil, blocking out areas of the permeable fabric. When ink is forced through the fabric using a squeegee, at those areas not blocked by the stenciling, the image is transferred to the paper or fabric beneath.

Because multiple originals can be made through printmaking processes, the cost of an individual print is considerably less than that of a painting. Printmaking techniques have been used in the print industry for illustrating newspapers and books since the development of the printing press in the fifteenth century.
PAINTING

Painting encompasses a wide variety of media and techniques. Paint is usually composed of three different materials: pigments, binders, and solvents. Pigments are finely ground materials that may be natural or synthetic. Natural pigments include clays, gemstones, and minerals, as well as plant and insect materials that make color when powdered. These powdered pigments are mixed with a binder that holds the grains of pigment together and allows the paint to adhere to a surface. Egg yolks, linseed oil, and wax can all be used as binders.

A solvent such as water or oil can be added to change the consistency of the paint or alter its drying time. As with drawing, painters can apply the media to a variety of surfaces such as boards, paper, canvas, and plaster walls. Paint can be applied to a surface with many different tools. We usually think of paintbrushes as the tools used to apply paint, but fingers, sticks, palette knives, and anything else that an artist imagines will make the desired kind of applicator may be used.

One specialized technique of painting that has a long history is the fresco. The fresco technique is usually used to paint on walls or ceilings. In creating a fresco, the artist mixes pure powdered pigments with water and applies them to a wet plaster ground. The paint is permanently bound in the plaster, so the artist must plan carefully because he or she will not be able to make changes after the fact. This kind of fresco is termed buon fresco ("true" fresco). If an artist uses the technique called fresco secco, he or she will apply paints to dry rather than wet plaster. Frescoes have been found in the ruins of Pompeii and in many medieval and Renaissance churches. Diego Rivera, the famous Mexican muralist of the early twentieth century, used this technique for his murals in Mexico and the United States.

When we think of painting, oil painting usually comes to mind first. Oil paints were not widely used until the 1400s, and prior to that time, tempera was the most commonly used paint. Tempera is a water-based paint. Many of us remember using tempera paint in elementary school. Traditional tempera paint, which uses egg as a binder, has been used by fine artists throughout history. Tempera painting requires great skill, and there are limitations to this medium. Tempera colors dry quickly, and so they cannot be blended once they are applied to a surface. Tempera also has a narrow tonal range—colors are either light or dark—and it cannot achieve the close imitation of natural effects that oil paints can. Nonetheless, the positive qualities of tempera are evidenced by the many ancient tempera paintings that still retain their clear and brilliant colors.

Oil paints are much more versatile than tempera paints. Oil paints can be easily mixed, and they may be thinned to build up layers of delicate glazes—thin transparent or semi-transparent layers that are applied over another color to alter it slightly. The translucency of glazes permits, for instance, a crimson layer underneath to shine through a yellow layer on top and can thus create brilliant, luminous effects that are impossible to achieve with tempera. Oils can be applied thickly or in heavy lumps to make an impasto surface. Since oils dry slowly, it is possible for an artist to work on an oil painting over a long period of time—days or even weeks.

In ancient Egypt, grave markers were painted with wax-based paints called encaustic. With encaustic, colored molten wax is fused with the surface via the application of hot irons. The fact that Egyptian markers have survived through the ages indicates the durability of the encaustic medium. Some painters today have returned to this ancient, traditional process.

Gouache is a water-based opaque paint that is similar to school-quality tempera, but of higher quality. Gouache has more body and dries more slowly than watercolor. It is a good medium for creating bright colors and meticulous details and is often used for design and fine artwork.

The most common water-based paint is watercolor. Watercolors are transparent, a quality that dictates the manner in which they are used. The white of the paper upon which the artist paints is a major factor in watercolor. White paint is rarely used in watercolors. Instead, to make tints, the artist adds more water to the paint. The lightest colors are applied first, and then the darker colors, working from background to foreground, from broad areas to areas of detail. Watercolor is not forgiving of mistakes, so watercolor artists must plan carefully and practice diligently.

A recent development in paint is acrylic paint. Made from synthetic materials, plastics, and polymers, acrylics were developed after World War II. Acrylics are very versatile. They do not require the slow, careful building up of successive layers with long drying periods in between as do oils. Acrylics are, however, unable to achieve some of the subtleties of which oil paints are capable. For artists who have developed allergies to oil paint and turpentine, acrylics offer a valuable alternative.
PHOTOGRAPHY
Photography was developed during the mid-nineteenth century, and it soon became a very popular way to document likenesses of people and scenes. The development of photography had a decided impact on other genres of art. As the use of photography grew, painters at first felt pressured to compete with the camera by achieving a higher degree of realism. Ultimately, however, artists felt less of a need to confine themselves to naturalistic styles of painting and were encouraged to explore various forms of art that were entirely beyond the reach of photography. Although not originally considered an art form, photography has gradually assumed a legitimacy within the art world that has only grown in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The medium of photography is in constant flux as new technology becomes available. In addition to still photography, film and video art are also used as art forms.

SCULPTURE
Sculpture is created in four basic ways: carving, modeling, casting, and construction. We usually think of sculpture as being freestanding, like the Venus de Milo or Michelangelo’s Pieta, but some sculptures are attached to surfaces such as doors, sarcophagi, altars, or church walls. Such reliefs may be carved into the stone or wood of the structure itself, or they may be cast of metal and fixed to the surface of the structure. High-relief sculpture projects significantly from the carrier surface, while low-relief sculpture projects only slightly. Reliefs can only be seen from a limited range, whereas a freestanding sculpture can be seen from every angle.

Carving is a subtractive process in which some of the original material is removed. For example, a stone or wood sculpture can be made by chiseling and gouging away with chisels, hammers, and files to bring the artist’s imagined form into physical existence. The scale of carved sculptures can range considerably, from miniature figures that rest on the tip of a finger to monumental forms carved of living rock.

Modeling is an additive process. A soft, workable material like clay, wax, plaster, or papier-mâché is formed by hand. Amounts of these materials can be added to the surface, and the surface can be shaped and decorated by hand or with simple tools.

Sometimes an unfired clay or wax sculpture can become the basis for a cast form. In this process, the original form is encased in plaster. When the plaster hardens, it is removed from the original form and retained for use as a mold. The mold can then be filled and thus used to create one or more casts of the original object. Sculptures may be cast in plaster, metal, and more recently, synthetic materials like plastic or polyester resins.

Some sculpture is constructed using a variety of methods. Metal sculpture can be welded from sheet metal or bent from wire. Some artists use paper, board, or wood that is cut and glued, nailed, or joined together by some other means and then possibly painted. Sometimes found objects are combined to create a new sculpture.

Some sculptures can move or can have moving parts. For example, Alexander Calder (1898–1976) created mobiles with forms suspended by wire which can be moved by wind or air currents. Other artists have used a wide variety of motors, pulleys, ropes, pumps, or other mechanical means to introduce movement to their sculptures.

Environmental art, also called Earthworks or Land art, is a newer category of art form that first emerged in the 1960s, and many works that fit in this category could be classified as sculpture. Environmental art is usually large in scale, is constructed on-site, and is usually not permanent. Environmental art occupies space that may be outside in the natural world or inside a gallery or museum. In either case, the artwork redefines the space in which it is installed. Sometimes, performance may be coupled with the actual installation, and often the viewer is, to some degree, drawn into and involved with the artwork. Often, an essential part of the work of environmental artists is the process of collaborating with the community and governmental
agencies to gain approval for their proposed works. Environmental art is often designed to be impermanent or to change over time. Photographs provide us with a more long-lasting documentation of these projects that are often designed to be fleeting in nature.

**MIXED MEDIA**

Mixed media is the name given to a category of artworks in which the artist uses several art media, sometimes in conjunction with found materials such as fabric, rope, broken dishes, newspaper, or children’s toys. Mixed media works can be either two- or three-dimensional. **Collage** is a kind of mixed media in which artists combine various materials such as photographs, unusual papers, theater tickets, and virtually any other materials that can be adhered to a surface. Artists will select materials for their texture, color, or other aesthetic properties or for their symbolic meaning. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque are credited with introducing this medium to the high-art sphere around 1912.

The artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) is well known for his mixed media pieces that combine silkscreen images with paint. Some artists create assemblages using all found objects, both two- and three-dimensional, in their compositions. Joseph Cornell (1903–72) was a twentieth-century artist who filled open boxes with a variety of objects that visually created symbolic and metaphoric statements. Among traditional and nonwestern cultural groups, masks, ceremonial costumes, and other objects often employ mixed media. Masks may be carved of wood and embellished with grasses, beads, and paint.

**PERFORMANCE**

Performance art is art in which the artist engages in some kind of performance, sometimes involving the viewers. Like environmental art, performance art lacks the permanence of more traditional genres of art. Videos or photographs of the performance may be the only remaining documentation of the event. In our world of canned, sterile, and constantly repeated media spectacles, performance art offers a means for recovering unique, unrepeatable human experiences. Since performances cannot be sold as objects, this art form has also been viewed by many as an escape from the increasing commercialization of art. True to the inventiveness of the artistic spirit, artists continue to explore new ideas, new materials, and new processes to express their unique perspectives and ideas. Such creative works continually challenge us to reconsider our own conceptions and definitions of the term “art.”

**CRAFT AND FOLK ART**

Craft, folk art, and popular art are all debated terms applied to a variety of art forms across cultures. In many cases, these terms are used to discuss art forms that are largely utilitarian. Through time and across cultures, people have often sought to make the objects they use more distinctive or beautiful. Consequently, pottery, jewelry, fibers, and glass and wooden objects have come to be recognized as art forms even though they may have a utilitarian purpose. A discussion of craft or folk art raises many questions about the nature of art and the aesthetic pursuit.

Pottery is a medium based upon the use of natural materials. Clay, dug from the ground, is the essential material. Many types of pots can be built using hands and simple tools. A basic pot can be formed from a ball of clay by punching the thumb into the center of the ball and pinching the clay between the thumb and fingers. Clay can also be rolled out into coils with the palm of the hand, and these coils can then be stacked up to form a clay vessel. Depending on the diameter of the coils, pots built in this way can be of enormous size or made on a tiny, dainty scale. Slab-built pots are made by rolling out clay and cutting carefully measured pieces, which are then assembled by applying liquid clay, called **slip**, to the edges that are to be joined.

The potter’s wheel was used in many ancient cultures and continues to be used by artists today. Using the potter’s wheel, the potter forms the basic shapes of the pot by manipulating the ball of clay as it turns on the wheel. When a potter uses a potter’s wheel to create pots, these pots are described as being “thrown.” Throwing allows for particularly thin-walled pots in a wide variety of shapes. Many potters combine hand-built and thrown forms to create beautiful objects that may or may not be functional.

Once the clay form has air-dried, the kiln, a specialized oven, is loaded and fired. In the kiln, all remaining moisture is driven out of the clay, and a chemical change takes place. The pots harden permanently. Then, glazes made of clay and minerals that provide color may be applied to the surface of the pots, and the pots are fired once again. The glazes melt, forming a glassy, waterproof surface on the pots that is both decorative and useful. The surface of a ceramic piece can also be decorated with applied clay designs or with decorations incised or carved into the surface of the piece.

Fiber arts include both woven and nonwoven materials. Weaving has a long history in the production of materials.
for clothing and other household needs. Some weaving techniques use a loom while others rely on simple braiding, knitting, or crochet. Quilting is another important craft form that is practiced by popular as well as fine artists.

Archaeological evidence indicates that glass was first made in the Middle East in the third millennium BCE. Glass is most often made of silica, which is derived from sand, flint, or quartz, combined with other raw materials. The introduction of additional minerals adds color. The development of glassblowing enabled the formation of glass vessels such as vases, drinking glasses, and perfume bottles. Stained glass became a dominant art form in the medieval period and was used to create the dramatic windows of cathedrals. By the end of the nineteenth century, stained glass had also become popular for lampshades and windows in residential homes.

Wood has been used to make functional objects such as furniture, boxes, boats, and homes. Northwest Coast Indians carve boxes and house boards with traditional designs. People all over the world have made wooden boats in varying practical and aesthetic forms. Today, artists make all kinds of objects from wood. Such objects may be functional, but first and foremost, they aim to be aesthetically pleasing. Functional objects like tables and chairs assume the status of art when the design is unique, the craftsmanship superb, and the visual effect beautiful. Sometimes these objects may no longer be functional, but become art for art’s sake.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is the art and science of designing and constructing buildings. People in every culture and geographic area have designed shelters that meet their needs for protection. As people have imagined structures for a variety of communal and personal uses, they have developed various methods of construction to realize their ideas. Specialists in designing structures have become known as architects.

In early times, materials that could be found locally were
used for building. Sticks, mud, grass, animal skins, ice, and wood were used in different climatic areas. Later, brick and stone were also used. An important architectural development was the use of the post-and-lintel construction technique in which a long stone or wooden beam is placed horizontally across upright posts. The famous Greek Parthenon is an example of post-and-lintel construction. This method is still commonly used today, with steel and wood being the favored materials.

Other key developments in architecture include the arch, the vault, and the dome. Each of these is a variation of the same concept that allowed for greater height and more interior open space inside a building. The Romans were great engineers, and the Colosseum in Rome provides a fine example of vaulted construction. The Romans developed concrete as a building material, which they used in building aqueducts, great baths, and other public works projects.

In the medieval period, a skeletal building style developed that alternated between strong buttresses and thin walls with stained-glass windows, which admitted more light and color into the building. Many medieval cathedrals provide classic examples of this method. The addition of flying buttresses—external arches that counterbalanced the outward thrust of the high, vaulted ceilings—allowed for even more height and window openings.

During the Industrial Revolution, many new materials and processes for building were developed. In 1851 the Crystal Palace, so named because it consisted mainly of glass walls that were held in place by a framework of slim, iron rods, was built for the world's fair in London. The Eiffel Tower in Paris, an amazing and beautiful monument, is primarily a framework of wrought iron.

Antonio Gaudi (1852–1926) created ingenious buildings of cut stone in Spain in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Without any flat surfaces or straight lines, Gaudi's buildings are very organic in appearance. While we usually think of buildings as being more modular, having a regular and geometric shape, many architects have challenged this notion and have searched for aesthetically interesting designs and new materials to move beyond the idea of a building as merely being a box-shaped construction.

Steel and concrete have become the favored materials for large public, commercial, and multi-family housing while wood and brick continue to be commonly used for residential homes. While many buildings are designed by builders using more standardized plans, leading architects continue to explore new and exciting designs and materials.

SECTION I SUMMARY

Art history is an academic discipline that seeks to reconstruct the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which an artwork was created. The basic goal of this work is to arrive at an understanding of art and its meaning in its original historical context. Art historians rely on a variety of documents and sources in order to conduct formal and contextual analyses.

The history of Western art is often studied chronologically. This study begins with early cave paintings in southeastern France and takes us to contemporary art all over the world.

Early civilizations arose in Mesopotamia. Other ancient Western cultures important for their art traditions include Egypt and Nubia, and the civilizations of the Aegean Islands, Greece, and Rome. The artworks that have survived from ancient civilizations are those made of durable materials. Often these artworks were preserved in places that were relatively inaccessible.

Tremendous shifts occurred in the art of the medieval period with the emergence of Christianity as a major religion and the Church as a powerful patron of the arts.

The Church remained an important patron of art during the Renaissance and Baroque periods; at the same time, there was also a rise in secular artworks during these periods, in light of the Protestant Reformation and general societal and economic shifts throughout Europe.

Major innovations of the Renaissance include the use of linear perspective and a move toward greater naturalism. Baroque art is generally distinct from Renaissance art because of its greater sense of movement and drama.

The Rococo style of art was closely tied to the power of the French aristocracy prior to the Revolution of 1789. The Neoclassical movement may in part be seen as a reaction to the Rococo and a response to the political and social revolution. Romanticism, in turn, was a reaction to the classicizing tendencies of Neoclassical art. Romanticism sought to appeal to the emotions and the senses.

Realism and Impressionism both emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both movements
were focused on everyday life as a subject matter, although Impressionism became increasingly concerned with ideas of visual perception.

Other late nineteenth-century developments included Post-Impressionism and the Pre-Raphaelites.

Modernism emerged in the early twentieth century. Important modernist movements include Cubism, Expressionism, Dada, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism.

The Armory Show in New York (1913) marked a shift in the art world, as the United States became a new center of progressive artistic activity.

Pop Art, Minimalism, and Photorealism responded to a post-WWII industrial culture. Installations, performance, and Environmental art (also known as Land art or Earthworks) all sought to challenge conventional ideas of art and its limitations.

In the past, areas of nonwestern art were not incorporated in the chronological study of Western art; distinct regions of the world have often been studied separately. Today, though, many art historians are challenging this based on the realization that art throughout the world is interconnected, especially in terms of contemporary art. Art historians sometimes rely on different methods to understand nonwestern art.

China, India, and Japan are among the major cultures of Asia. All three countries have ancient traditions and have produced art that relates to political power and religious practice.

Ancient traditions can also be found in Africa. Often the arts of Africa and Oceania were created for very different functions from art in the Western traditions; consequently, there are tremendous formal differences as well.

Islam is a major world religion that has produced much art. Most Islamic art is non-figurative.

Ancient civilizations existed in the Americas as well. Archaeology is often used to learn about these civilizations and their art.

In addition to understanding context, art historians seek to describe the formal qualities of artworks. Important terms used to discuss the formal qualities of an artwork include: line, shape and form, perspective, color, texture, and composition.

Artists throughout time have worked in a variety of media, including drawing, printmaking, painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, performance, craft and folk art, and architecture.
Section II
Setting the Stage for the Art of the 1960s

INTRODUCING THE SIXTIES

Developments percolating in the realm of high art by the late 1950s exploded in the 1960s, reflecting the political tumult of the period as well as its utopian spirit of experimentation and freedom. New York had become the center of the art world in the wake of World War II, but by the ‘60s, Europe had recovered from the war’s devastation, creating a context for influential galleries in Paris, London, Cologne, and Antwerp, and important exhibitions of European and American art. Art in the ‘60s, dominated at first by Pop art, quickly became wildly heterogeneous, as artists experimented within established mediums, changing them from the inside, and also across disciplines, combining art with music, dance, and theater.

As evidenced by the work of certain artists of the time, the 1960s represent a particularly turbulent period in world history, punctuated by violent events with disastrous consequences. The Vietnam War, which had its roots in the 1950s, escalated in the 1960s, with U.S. ground troops becoming involved in 1965. The war raged throughout the entire decade, alongside the so-called “Cold War” between the West and the Soviet Union, sparking the rise of an international student movement in the late ‘60s, which was motivated by a desire for peace and policy reforms that would make atrocities less likely in the future; the movement was met with state violence in Europe and the U.S., intensifying tensions further.

Race riots characterized the early 1960s, giving rise to the Civil Rights movement and the national prominence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X, who was associated with the Nation of Islam. The Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, was passed in 1964, but it only stoked the flames of racial violence: Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965 and King was murdered three years later. President John F. Kennedy, who vocally opposed the Jim Crow laws that segregated the American South, was assassinated in Texas in 1963, and his brother, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was assassinated five years later as he was campaigning for president.

Political conservatism was also met with cultural revolution in the form of Hippies, free love, and The Beatles. The ubiquity of the television and the much faster circulation of images and ideas around the planet enabled the formation of an international youth culture that fueled the antiwar and student movements. The television also proved key to the final major event of the ‘60s, which represented the pinnacle of scientific achievement: the Apollo 11 moon landing, which was watched live by an estimated 600 million people.

Despite the revolutionary spirit of the ‘60s, it must be acknowledged that in Europe and America, white male artists continued to dominate the art world, as did a broader political conservatism. Male artists had a much easier time gaining visibility for their work in gallery shows; museum exhibitions; and at commercial art fairs, a new kind of venue, combining sales and exhibition strategies, that emerged in Germany in the late ‘60s. Women and people of color...
were increasingly admitted to prestigious art schools, but it remained difficult for them to attract the notice of art critics or art dealers, many of whom believed it would be too challenging to sell art by women or people of color even if it was good. Artists outside of Europe and America were also engaged with parallel aesthetic concerns, but the attitude still prevailed that Europe and America together constituted the epicenter of artistic production and fostered the only version of modern art that mattered.

Artists who created exceptional works in the 1960s but were not successful at the time (or simply not visible in European and American contexts) continue to be “discovered” today. The result is a constantly revised historical record that illuminates not only those who were left out of the narrative we have inherited, but also the ingrained prejudice that blinded their contemporaries to their achievements. The history of the ‘60s, in other words, is still being written, and this guide will present only a very partial view of some of the most influential and innovative artists and artworks of that decade.

REWIND: AN OVERVIEW OF ART IN EUROPE AND AMERICA AFTER WORLD WAR II

As with any period of artistic production, the 1960s was characterized by reactions to the artistic developments of the 1950s, whether artists turned away from ‘50s practices or tried to expand upon them and shift them in new directions. This section of the resource guide addresses two key artists and positions of the ‘50s in order to set the stage for the art of the ‘60s that will dominate the rest of the guide.

World War II left much of Western Europe (as well as Japan) physically, economically, and psychologically devastated. Bombing raids had destroyed centuries of cultural heritage and rendered some of Europe’s most magnificent cities to mere piles of rubble. Millions of Europe’s citizens had been killed, whether on the front or at home, and many survivors suffered from extreme poverty long after the war ended. Finally, Germany’s systematic murder of 12 million people—including 6 million Jews, alongside political dissidents, homosexuals, Communists, and the disabled—constituted a tragedy of proportions never before confronted on the world stage. What became known as the Holocaust, the details of which continued to come to light in the years following the war, caused a crisis of humanity in Germany and elsewhere. In the wake of such a horrifying event, in which many had participated willingly, artists found themselves asking, what role should art have in society? Does it have the power to change society for the better, or is it more advantageous for art to attempt to operate in an autonomous sphere, unfettered by social concerns?

World War II had further repercussions for the Western art world. Prior to the war, Paris had been, without a doubt, the center of that world. Artists worked and lived in other places, of course, but many believed it utterly essential to travel to Paris to study with masters of painting and sculpture, to live among fellow artists in the city’s bohemian districts, and to spend as many hours as they could with the treasures of the Musée du Louvre. After World War II, in part because of the trauma that France had experienced under nearly five years of Nazi occupation, Paris was overtaken by New York. The American metropolis was the cultural capital of the U.S., now positioned as a global power, and by the end of the war was already home to a number of artists who had escaped the situation in Europe. New York’s rise in the international art scene was helped significantly by the development of a new movement in painting presented as distinctly American. Abstract Expressionism, which is also tellingly called the “New York School,” emerged out of the stylistically diverse painting practices of a number of artists, including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, Barnett Newman, Joan Mitchell, Adolph Gottlieb, and Clyfford Still. Though Abstract Expressionism (abbreviated as AbEx hereafter) was lauded as an American movement, it is important to note that one of the most influential painting teachers associated with the movement, Hans Hofmann, was a German émigré, while Gorky, de Kooning, and Rothko...
were all born outside of the U.S. AbEx also had equivalents in Western Europe, movements called Tachisme and Art Informel, though they differed in some important respects, and the New York School maintained a distinct character.

Although each AbEx artist had his or her own formal approach to painting, they were all in search of deeper meaning, whether spiritual, mystical, or philosophical. All of these artists rejected representation, opting instead to paint exclusively abstract forms that did not mimic forms found in daily life or in nature. Influenced in part by the Surrealist movement of the 1920s and ‘30s, the AbEx painters also understood their work to be an expression of their inner selves or psyches, and thus highly individual, while at the same time they believed that such expressions were conduits for universal human themes.

Above all else, the AbEx painters valued what they saw as the freedom to experiment. Scholars who have assessed AbEx retrospectively, however, have argued that, contrary to the rhetoric of freedom adopted by AbEx artists, political conservatism in the U.S. forced them to express themselves by abstract means alone, as many cultural producers at the time were at risk of being persecuted by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee, which aimed to root out and blacklist Communist sympathizers in all corners of American society. AbEx remained the dominant paradigm of art-making throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Already in the ‘50s, however, a number of young artists wanted to learn from, challenge, and supersede AbEx. Jasper Johns and Allan Kaprow each took different aspects of AbEx painting and made them their own, pushing art toward new horizons that would break open even further in the decade that followed.

**SELECTED ARTWORK: JASPER JOHNS, FLAG, 1954–55**

Jasper Johns was born in 1930 in Augusta, Georgia, and raised in rural South Carolina. After his parents divorced, he bounced around to various relatives’ homes. From the age of ten, he lived with his aunt, a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse where Johns was educated until high school. He attended the University of South Carolina at Columbia for just three semesters before moving to New York in 1948 at the urging of his art teachers, one of whom had studied with Hans Hofmann. As Johns said later, “I’d wanted to be an artist from age five. No one in my immediate family was involved with art... but somehow the idea must have been conveyed to me that an artist is someone of interest in society.”

In New York Johns enrolled in the Parsons School of Design for a semester, but ran out of money and declined a scholarship, taking a job as a messenger instead. Despite his difficulties, he saw a number of important exhibitions, with works by Hofmann, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Edvard Munch, and Barnett Newman, among others, which left a particular impression on him. He took the admissions test for art school at Cooper Union, which was free, but was drafted in 1951 before he could begin classes. Johns served two years in the army during the Korean War, stationed in South Carolina (where he set up an art exhibition program for soldiers) and Japan, and returned to New York in 1953, determined to become an artist.

Shortly after returning to New York, Johns met the artist Robert Rauschenberg (also a Southerner by birth) through a friend, and within a year, also met the composer John Cage and the choreographer Merce Cunningham. They all became close friends, and each would come to be considered among the most innovative and
groundbreaking artists of the twentieth century. But Johns had a particularly close relationship with Rauschenberg, both romantic and artistic, that lasted from 1954 to 1961. It was Rauschenberg who finally convinced Johns to quit his day job in a bookstore in 1954 and join him creating window displays on a freelance basis, leaving more time for his painting practice to develop.

That same year, Johns hit upon the idea of using a technique called encaustic. Encaustic is a method of painting in which pigment is suspended in hot wax. The wax is applied to a canvas or other substrate (like wood or cloth) and reheated to fuse it with the canvas. The encaustic then cools and hardens very quickly. The speed at which encaustic dries was one major reason Johns preferred it, for it allowed him to keep working areas of a painting that otherwise would have required several hours to dry.²

At the same time that Johns discovered encaustic, he recalled that, “there was a change in my spirit, in my thought and my work, as well as some doubt and terror,” and he finally felt he had figured out a path forward as a painter.³ He destroyed almost all of his work, and, after a dream in which he saw himself painting a large American flag, he began to paint in the late fall of 1954 what would be his breakthrough picture.

**FLAG: ANALYSIS**

*Flag*, which Johns finished in the winter or early spring of 1955, looks fairly straightforward, especially in reproduction, but it is in fact a multi-layered, multi-part painting. Johns painted *Flag* in three pieces on bedsheets mounted to wood panels, embedding bits of newspaper under pigmented encaustic that he painted on in thick, textured layers. The newspaper is legible up close, revealing bits of local and international news stories from 1954 and 1955 alongside recipes, advertisements, and cartoons. From afar, the three panels of the painting cohere into one image—the image of a flag—but up close, one can discern where the panels meet, making the construction of the work obvious.

Why an American flag? One theory (besides Johns’ admission that it came to him in a dream) suggests that the flag is an autobiographical reference to the military hero after whom Johns was named, who bravely raised the flag during the Revolutionary War. Johns claimed that he was interested, however, in simply using “pre-formed, conventional, depersonalized, factual, exterior elements”—that is, images that exist in the world around us and that are easily and instantly recognizable. Such images in Johns’ work have been likened to Marcel Duchamp’s readymades of the 1910s, which consisted of barely altered store-bought items (including a urinal, bottle rack, and shovel) presented as sculpture. (Johns saw Duchamp’s work in Philadelphia in 1957 and went on to purchase a number of his works.)

The choice of a familiar motif allowed Johns to play with the formal elements of painting itself without worrying about deeply meaningful subject matter. It was, in essence, a strong reaction to the claims of Abstract Expressionism, which avoided representational forms in order to use abstraction to access the inner psyche and express universal truths. Johns radically turned back to representation, but paradoxically in order to make it so literal that it could be abstract: *Flag* mimicked the appearance of a flag, but it was not an actual flag, and the painting highlighted that disjunction between the image of a thing, its name, and the thing itself.

Johns’ philosophical approach was indebted to that of Surrealist painter René Magritte. In 1954, Johns saw a
version of Magritte’s 1929 painting *The Treachery of Images* at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York. The painting depicts a smoking pipe with a caption directly below that says, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe,” this is not a pipe. Magritte was illuminating with the pipe precisely what Johns would with his flag: the representation of a pipe or a flag is not the same as what it represents. As Johns became well known for his paintings of flags, later works that depicted the flag came to be seen not as references to the flag as a real-world object, but rather as references to Johns’ prior paintings of flags. In that way, Johns revealed the arbitrariness and flexibility of what are called, in the field of linguistics and semiology, “signs,” or carriers of meaning. That Johns was able to effect such a shift in meaning using a symbol that usually bears the heavy weight of historical and political meaning makes his achievement all the more important.

**JOHNS’ CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE**

The American flag is typical of Johns’ use of quotidian imagery in the mid to late 1950s. As he explained, the imagery derives from “things the mind already knows,” which expanded beyond the flag to include targets, stenciled numbers, ale cans, and, later, maps of the U.S. Just after finishing *Flag*, Johns created *Target with Four Faces*, which consists of a painting of a shooting target topped with four cast heads looking out from a wooden cabinet of sorts, perhaps referencing the wooden boxes in Joseph Cornell’s work, which Johns had admired.

*Target* appeared on the cover of *Artnews* magazine in January 1958, when Johns was still entirely unknown in the New York art world. By that time, however, the influential gallerist Leo Castelli, tipped off to Johns’ work by Robert Rauschenberg, had agreed to mount Johns’ first solo show, which opened just two weeks after the release of the *Artnews* cover. The show sold out, with curator Alfred J. Barr, Jr. purchasing three paintings on the spot for the Museum of Modern Art. He had also wanted to buy *Flag* but was worried that the museum’s acquisitions committee would find it unpatriotic (a risk many would not have wanted to take at the height of McCarthyism in the U.S.). He instead convinced the architect Philip Johnson to buy it, and Johnson donated it to the museum in Barr’s honor in 1973.

The show at Castelli touched off a career that has continued to this day, with Johns producing ever more surprising paintings and sculptures. Unlike most artists of his generation, Johns also became a committed and highly accomplished printmaker, transforming motifs from his paintings and sculptures into reproducible media, including etchings, lithographs, and monotypes. Across his body of work, Johns has continued to give viewers pause, to make them consider the nature of what they are seeing and how the representation of a given motif—whether a flag or a letter of the alphabet—corresponds, or diverges, from the thing it supposedly represents. As we shall see, many artists in the 1960s would take that idea and run with it, whether through Pop art’s invocations of everyday images and objects or through Conceptual artists’ play with semiotics and meaning.

**SELECTED ARTWORK: ALLAN KAPROW, 18 HAPPENINGS IN 6 PARTS, 1959**

**KAPROW’S EARLY CAREER**

Allan Kaprow was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1927. He attended boarding school in Tucson, Arizona, and later the High School of Music and Art in New York. He received a bachelor’s degree from New York University with majors in philosophy and art history in 1949; in his final year at NYU, he also studied at Hans Hofmann’s privately run painting school, learning Abstract Expressionist methods. He went on to earn a master’s degree in art history at Columbia University in 1952, studying under Meyer Schapiro, and that year helped to found an artists’ cooperative called Hansa Gallery. He took up a teaching position at Rutgers University in 1953 and became a lifelong teacher. (He
later taught at the State University of New York, Stony Brook; California Institute of the Arts; and University of California, San Diego, where he retired in 1992.)

By the mid-1950s, Kaprow had begun making collages and assemblages, gathering elements from everyday life and combining them into what were called “action-collages.” He worked quickly, applying paint to canvas with gestural brushstrokes (reminiscent of AbEx painting) and incorporating all kinds of quotidian detritus, from crumpled paper and aluminum foil to apples, oranges, and cardboard boxes. The assemblages gave way in the late 1950s to what Kaprow called Environments, entire spaces filled with objects that viewers would have to navigate physically, often in a way that altered the arrangement of the space.

From 1957 to 1958, Kaprow attended the weekly course in music composition that John Cage taught at the New School for Social Research, a haven for progressive pedagogy since its founding in New York in 1919. Kaprow’s fellow students included George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, and La Monte Young, all of whom would become associated with the Fluxus movement. Cage opened Kaprow’s eyes to new possibilities for art, as he used the musical score as a proxy for temporality, repeatability, and elements of chance through audience participation, as in Cage’s famous score 4’33”, in which the pianist is silent (aside from opening and closing the keylid), thus allowing the audience’s nervous fidgets, coughs, laughs, and murmurs to fill the void and fulfill the openness of the score.

**KAPROW’S WRITING ON JACKSON POLLOCK**

Cage’s teaching helped Kaprow figure out how to respond to and extend the legacy of Jackson Pollock, who had died in a car crash in 1956 at the height of his fame. In 1947, Pollock had developed a radical new technique, pouring and dripping paint onto raw canvas laid on the ground, rejecting traditional methods of painting in which pigment is applied with a brush to a canvas positioned on an easel. Pollock’s entirely abstract paintings were shocking to the general public (a famous cartoon showing a monkey dripping paint on canvas played up the skepticism with which Pollock’s art was received), but Pollock’s drips became one of the crowning achievements of Abstract Expressionism, attaining an all-over, immersive picture that emphasized painting’s basic elements: line, color, and the canvas and paint themselves as materials.

Pollock moved around the canvas like a dancer. A performance of his process was captured in still photographs and film by Hans Namuth in 1950 and broadcast to the public in 1951. One year later, critic Harold Rosenberg coined the term “action painting” to describe Pollock’s work and that of a number of his AbEx contemporaries. In the essay “The American Action Painters,” Rosenberg writes:

> At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event."
Kaprow was captivated by Pollock’s emphasis on a highly active process of art-making and saw Pollock’s work as “blurring the edges between his art and the world beyond.” In an essay published in 1958, titled “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” Kaprow wrote passionately that:

Pollock...left us at the point where we must become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-Second Street.” He added, “Young artists of today need no longer say ‘I am a painter’ or ‘a poet’ or ‘a dancer.’ They are simply ‘artists.’ All of life will be open to them. They will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning. But out of nothing they will devise the extraordinary and then maybe nothingness as well. People will be delighted or horrified, critics will be confused or amused, but these, I am certain, will be the alchemies of the 1960s."

Kaprow’s text turned out to be quite prescient, accurately predicting the major turn in the ‘60s to practices that aimed to blend art and life—a turn that would be effected in part through the art form Kaprow was developing, called Happenings.

Happenings, which became larger and more complex after their initial debut, collapsed the boundaries between art and theater, creating a time-bound spectacle in which spectators were made active participants. (In later Happenings, attendees did much more than simply shift rooms during the event.) After attending a number of Happenings, critic Susan Sontag wrote in an incisive essay in 1962 that they have no plot, no “climax or consummation,” and audiences usually have to be signaled, as a result, when a Happening has ended. Sontag compared Happenings to modernist works of art, arguing that such events have an autonomous totality that mirrors that of modernist painting. Sontag also argued that the primary concern of Happenings is an engagement with materials, which aligns with Kaprow’s earlier investments in assemblage, collage, and the detritus of everyday life. She writes, “This preoccupation with materials, which might seem to make the Happenings more like painting than theatre, is also expressed in the use or treatment of persons as material objects rather than ‘characters’.”

One of the important precursors for Kaprow’s Happenings was an event titled Theater Piece No. 1, which took place at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1952. Black Mountain was an important art school, attracting avant-garde artists from Europe and America to teach courses and engage in experimental activities. John Cage made a number of visits beginning in 1948 and was inspired by a series of all-white paintings that Robert Rauschenberg was making there.
Theater Piece No. 1, organized by Cage, the composer stood on a ladder at the center of the space and delivered a lecture while artists, musicians, and dancers moved around the space, where one of Rauschenberg’s white paintings was included as part of a minimal set design. Considered by many to be the first happening, Theater Piece No. 1—and Cage’s interests in time, scored events, and the merging of art and life—strongly influenced Kaprow’s development of Happenings.

**KAPROW’S INFLUENCE**

Happenings began in 1958 and were solidified as an art form by 1962. Many of Kaprow’s fellow artists, including Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine, who were central players in the Happenings scene, eventually shifted to Pop art, but Kaprow stayed the course, continuing to explore and refine the form he had created. In the late 1960s, he gradually moved away from heavily scripted Happenings to pieces based on short instructions, and he often documented the carrying out of those instructions with deadpan black and white photographs, a strategy also used contemporaneously by Conceptual artists.

It is important to note, as Sontag did in her early essay on Happenings, that as events which produced nothing for sale, they deliberately resisted the art market, which was becoming an ever more dominant feature of the art world in New York at the time. By emphasizing ephemerality and presentness, Happenings bucked the market’s desire for objects to sell. These works have been, perhaps as an unintended result, difficult to assimilate into the canon of art history because they were rarely well-documented.

18 Happenings in 6 Parts “exists” today in the form of several written accounts, a handful of photographs, the printed program, and Kaprow’s written score, making it hard for us to fully comprehend everything that occurred and how it might have felt to be a participant or spectator at the event. Even though our information about them is limited by these circumstances, Happenings, as we shall see in the following sections, were incredibly important for several movements that aimed to bring art and daily life closer together, from Pop art to Land art. Happenings also laid the groundwork for performance art, which continues to be a prominent form of contemporary artistic practice to the present day.

**SECTION II SUMMARY**

- The 1960s were a time of political unrest and cultural revolution.
- To understand the ‘60s we have to begin with important developments in the 1950s, which artists in the ‘60s sought to challenge or expand upon.
- The history of art in the ‘60s is still being written today, largely because many women artists, artists of color, and artists working outside of Europe and America were overlooked by galleries and museums at the time.
- The atrocities of World War II created a crisis among many artists who wondered what role art should have in society—whether it ought to attempt to change society for the better, or whether it should operate autonomously, unfettered by social concerns.
- The center of the Western art world shifted from Paris to New York after World War II.
- The rise of New York as the center of the art world was aided by the development of what became known as Abstract Expression or the New York School, a stylistically diverse movement of painters who all lived and worked in New York.
- Abstract Expressionist painters all rejected representation in favor of abstraction, and understood their work to be an expression of their inner selves or psyches, which were conduits for universal human themes.

**Important Terms**

- **Action painting** – term used to describe Jackson Pollock’s painting (and Abstract Expressionism painting in general) that was coined by critic Harold Rosenberg; it emphasized Pollock’s movement around his floor-bound canvas and the aggressive action required to complete the painting. Kaprow was inspired by the term (and Pollock’s painting) to create action-collages, Environments, and eventually Happenings.
- **Happenings** – an art form developed by Kaprow in the late 1950s consisting of scored, scripted, durational events, typically involving a number of nonprofessional participants and an unspecified...
number of spectators, who are often required to perform tasks as well; Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine, and many other artists were key to the success and proliferation of Happenings in the late 1950s and early '60s. Happenings were an important precursor to Fluxus and performance art.

**Readymades** – First developed by Marcel Duchamp around 1915, readymades were works of art created from existing manufactured objects, including bottle racks, urinals, and shovels. Artistic intervention was very limited, and these works generated questions about the very meaning of art and the role of the artist in its creation. Jasper Johns invoked the readymade in choosing recognizable, symbolic images for his paintings.

**Surrealism** – an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement led by poet André Breton, beginning in 1924 and lasting until World War II; important artists associated with the movement include Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Man Ray, and Joan Miró. Surrealists were interested in automatism, experimental language, and found objects. Magritte’s interest in language, combined with Duchamp’s innovation of the readymade, greatly influenced Johns’ philosophical approach to painting.

**Key Artists and Artworks**

**Jasper Johns, Flag, 1954–55**

- Johns had limited art training, but knew from a young age that he wanted to become an artist.
- Johns met Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage in 1953–54 and found himself at the center of one of the most important circles in avant-garde art.
- Johns and Rauschenberg had a romantic and professional relationship that lasted from 1954–61; it was thanks to Rauschenberg that Johns became a full-time painter and secured his first solo gallery show.

- Johns began experimenting with encaustic, a wax-based paint, in 1954, at the same time that he decided to paint recognizable symbols, including the American flag.
- Johns wanted to paint flags (along with targets, numerals, and other familiar symbols) because they were “things the mind already knows.”
- René Magritte’s 1929 painting *The Treachery of Images* likely contributed to Johns’ philosophical approach, which highlighted the arbitrariness and flexibility of language.

**Allan Kaprow, 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, 1959**

- Kaprow was trained as both an art historian and a painter, with degrees from New York University and Columbia University.
- From 1957–58, Kaprow attended John Cage’s music composition courses at the New School for Social Research.
- Kaprow sought to merge the legacy of Jackson Pollock’s “action painting” with the score- and time-based principles he learned from Cage.
- Kaprow made assemblages and collages in the 1950s, followed by Environments.
- 18 Happenings in 6 Parts was staged in 1959 in an empty loft in New York that had been divided into three spaces.
- The score for 18 Happenings directed six participants to perform various actions over the course of an hour, and required spectators to move during intermissions.
- Happenings collapsed the boundaries between art and theater, as well as between spectator and performance.
- In merging art and life, Happenings laid the groundwork for many of the artistic developments of the 1960s.
According to modernist critics, art—whether painting, sculpture, poetry, or music—was meant to engender a particular kind of aesthetic experience, which some characterized as spiritual or mystical, that took the viewer out of the humdrum of everyday existence and, through contemplation, offered a momentary glimpse of something beyond our imperfect world. These critics, and the artists they valorized, did not necessarily think that art should be apolitical; in fact, they thought that the only way art could respond to the world was by maintaining some distance from it, hence the emphasis on art as an “autonomous sphere.”

However, artists of the late 1950s and early 1960s rejected this call for autonomy, advocating instead that art needed to get down into the muck of everyday life in order to remain relevant. Their motivations for doing so were mixed: some artists wanted to use quotidian objects or behaviors in their work to make the everyday unfamiliar and strange, as a way of commenting on the ideologies that structure our experiences and make them seem natural. Other artists celebrated the everyday, wanting to elevate the banalities and oddities of daily life to a sphere that had been traditionally reserved for magnificence, opulence, and monumentality, both as a critique of the bourgeoisie and as a way to make art more accessible (at least in its familiar component materials or images) to the less wealthy. Still others, most notably Andy Warhol, maintained an ambivalent position, refusing to clarify whether their work glorified or critiqued features of modern life, including consumerism, the mass media, and the cult of celebrity.

Three of the four artists discussed in this section were associated with Pop art, a movement that began in the mid-1950s in England and spread to the United States, where it became extremely popular in the 1960s. The term “Pop art” has two primary meanings. The first meaning comes from “pop” as a shorthand or abbreviation for popular culture, a term that usually refers to constructed images and objects encountered in everyday life, often through the mass media, which includes advertising, film, television, newspapers, comic strips, graphic novels, and so on. The other meaning of Pop is related: it takes the word “pop” quite literally, as artists aimed to make aesthetically bold works that would pop out at the viewer with familiar, instantly recognizable images. That kind of visual immediacy strongly contrasted with the work of the previous era, notably AbEx painting, which often involved complex passages of line and color that required the eye to move around and dissect the work and its many internal relationships.

The four works discussed in this section were selected because each one opens up these issues in a different way. As you will see, each work also responds to the legacies of Marcel Duchamp’s “readymades” and AbEx painting (the two important precursors of 1960s artistic practice outlined in Section II) to different ends.

**SELECTED ARTWORK: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, BLACK MARKET, 1961**

**RAUSCHENBERG’S EARLY CAREER**
Born Milton Rauschenberg in 1925 in Port Arthur, Texas, Robert Rauschenberg had a simple, small-town upbringing. He briefly studied pharmacology at the University of Texas, Austin, before being drafted into the U.S. Navy during World War II and serving as a neuropsychiatric technician in a military hospital in San Diego. It was during his time in the Navy that...
Rauschenberg saw paintings for the first time (at the Huntington Art Gallery) and realized that he had an aptitude for drawing. He enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1947 and traveled to Paris on the G.I. Bill to study at the Académie Julian in 1948.

After Rauschenberg returned to the United States in the fall of 1948, he joined Susan Weil, a student he had met in Paris, to study under German-born artist Josef Albers at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. (Rauschenberg and Weil married in 1950 and separated a few years later.) He spent time at Black Mountain intermittently through 1952, encountering there a number of important avant-garde figures who would become important collaborators over the next two decades, including the composer John Cage and the choreographer Merce Cunningham. Between 1949 and 1951, Rauschenberg also took art classes at the Art Students League in New York, and through connections there he was offered his first solo exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery. His earliest works included experiments with blueprint paper and monochromatic white paintings, which had been included as elements of the set design in the groundbreaking artwork Theater Piece No. 1, organized by Cage at Black Mountain, which is often credited as the first Happening.

Rauschenberg traveled with the artist Cy Twombly in Europe and North Africa in 1952–53 and exhibited in Rome and Florence a series of small collages, assemblages, and small boxes filled with objects he found on his travels. Upon returning to New York in 1953 he made a number of important conceptual works, including Automobile Tire Print (1953) and Erased de

Kooning Drawing (1953) and began to construct both sculptures and paintings made from found materials. By 1954, shortly after he had met the artist Jasper Johns, who would become a collaborator and romantic partner, Rauschenberg was deliberately melding features of painting and sculpture with the use of found materials and called the resulting hybrid objects “Combines.” To make the Combine Bed (1955), Rauschenberg attached a sheet, quilt, and pillow to a tall rectangular framed canvas and then, in the style of an AbEx painter, dripped thick paint in an array of colors down the “bed,” allowing it to congeal over the folds of the fabric. One of his most infamous Combines, Monogram, begun in 1955 and finished in 1959, consists of a stuffed goat, encircled around its middle with a car tire, standing atop a canvas covered with paint and found objects. The Combines evidenced Rauschenberg’s play with expectations and his interest in putting everyday things in new and surprising arrangements. As Rauschenberg once said, “There’s no reason not to consider the world as one gigantic painting.”

BLACK MARKET: ANALYSIS

The Combine Black Market, created in 1961, consists of a wall-mounted square format assemblage covered in a variety of materials, including oil, watercolor, pencil, paper, fabric, newspaper, printed paper, printed reproductions, wood, metal, tin, and four metal clipboards on canvas. Toward the top of the canvas is mounted a street sign that says “ONE WAY,” with an arrow that points to a length of rope that snakes down to the floor, where it is attached to a small brown suitcase. Inside the suitcase, one finds a set of stamps (numbered 1–4), an inkpad, four notebooks, sharpened pencils, and four small “readymades,” which, over time, have included objects such as a photograph, flashlight, and handkerchief. The contents of the suitcase change over time because viewers of the work are invited to take an object and leave one behind. Instructions written by Rauschenberg (and translated into ten languages) appear inside the lid, entreating visitors as follows: “Objects 1, 2, 3, or 4 may be taken if a new object is put in its place. Please stamp the new object with the correct number, and trace or draw it into the book of the same number, and sign your name.”

Black Market attempts to bring art and life closer together in two ways. First, Rauschenberg uses everyday materials, which he has not assimilated into a unified, beautiful, transcendent work of art, but rather into something that
looks as though it had been found on the street. Each component part remains discrete and heterogeneous—the materials appear straightforward and relatively unchanged from how they appear in the world. Second, Black Market invites viewers to complete the artwork through their interaction with the metal clipboards or through their participation in the trade of objects in the suitcase. The work is thus ongoing, its very materials constantly changed through the participation of viewers who have been empowered to do more than just passively contemplate the work. These two strategies provide the key to understanding the work’s title, a reference to illegal, underground systems of trade. Rauschenberg has “smuggled” everyday materials into the austere, sacred space of the museum, and through the exchange of objects in the suitcase, he invites viewers to “smuggle” their personal effects into the museum as well, making them complicit in the fulfillment of the artist’s work.

LARGER CONTEXT: INTERACTIVITY, PARTICIPATION, AND COLLABORATION

In his earlier works, Rauschenberg had experimented with doors that could open to reveal hidden objects and had also asked other artists to contribute to his work. He combined the two strategies in his 1955 Combine Short Circuit, which included works by Susan Weil and Jasper Johns hidden behind a hinged door. Rauschenberg employed interaction and collaboration as strategies to undermine his status as author, extending the impact of the readymade. Duchamp wrote in 1957: “All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.” Rauschenberg, taking the role of the spectator even further, made literal the idea that the spectator contributes to the creative act.

It should be noted, however, that the desire of artists to make viewers active participants in the life of a work has had mixed results. The art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh published an influential critique of interactive objects such as Black Market, alleging that the kind of participation they invited was rather restricted and sometimes even infantilizing, although one might counter that it was nevertheless radical to invite viewers, as Rauschenberg did, to add their own possessions to a work of art. On a practical level, Black Market ceased to be an interactive artwork at a certain point in its history, and viewers were no longer invited to take objects from the suitcase and add their own, nor were they permitted to touch the moveable parts on the wall-mounted part of the Combine. (When the work was on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2017, for example, it was surrounded by stanchions and protected by a “Do not touch” sign.) The tension between artistic intention and institutional concerns for preservation and safety heightened as artworks from the late 1950s and early 1960s began entering museum collections, posing questions that relatively straightforward paintings, sculptures, and works on paper had not previously presented. Interactive or participatory artworks remain common in contemporary artistic practice, engendering ongoing conversations among museum professionals, art historians, and artists about how to navigate divergent desires and concerns.
OLDENBURG’S EARLY CAREER

The son of a Swedish diplomat, Claes Oldenburg was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1929, and lived in the United States and Norway before his family settled in Chicago in 1936. (He would become an American citizen at the age of twenty-four, in 1953.) Oldenburg completed undergraduate study at Yale University in literature and art history in 1950 and subsequently studied art under Paul Wieghardt at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1950 to 1954. During his first two years of art school, he also worked as a reporter at the City News Bureau of Chicago. Oldenburg moved to New York in 1956 and met several artists experimenting with performance art, including George Brecht, Allan Kaprow, George Segal, and Robert Whitman, who would usher him into the avant-garde downtown scene that gave rise to Happenings and hosted experimental dance and music as well.

In 1960, Oldenburg had his first major gallery show at the Judson Gallery, for which he constructed an environment titled The Street. It consisted of silhouettes made from trash that Oldenburg had collected on the streets of New York, set in a landscape of yet more garbage strewn on the floor—all of which became the backdrop for Oldenburg’s first Happening, Snapshots from the City, which culminated in a fake yard sale of the objects in the show. A year later, Oldenburg staged his next project, The Store, first in a gallery show and then in a storefront on New York’s Lower East Side, a working-class neighborhood full of secondhand “dime stores.” For his store, Oldenburg created dozens of plaster sculptures that replicated mundane everyday items, from baked potatoes to t-shirts. To make them, Oldenburg fashioned an armature or skeleton out of chicken wire and then draped the wire with cloth soaked in plaster, a pasty mixture of lime, water, and sand that hardens when it dries. He then painted the dried plaster using commercial enamel paint to give each object a garish, colorful finish, often with visible, drippy brushstrokes that poked fun at AbEx painting. The objects were lumpy and typically exaggerated in scale, making them quite amusing, especially when gathered en masse in a crowded storefront. Humor is a strategy that Oldenburg employed consistently to break down the barriers between “high art” and everyday life; in the case of The Store, the point of stocking a storefront with sculptural objects was to demonstrate, wryly, that there is no significant difference between the commerce of the art world and that of the thrift store, despite the art world’s pretentions otherwise.

In 1963, less than two years after creating The Store, Oldenburg presented for the first time yet another innovation in three-dimensional art, his so-called “soft sculptures.” He continued referencing the stuff of everyday life, but wanted to exaggerate the scale of his objects even further in order to emulate the monumentality of luxury cars and grand pianos, which he had seen in showroom windows not far from his New York gallery. Plaster would be too unwieldy at that size, so he experimented with using sewn fabric, possibly after having seen the work of Yayoi Kusama, whose studio was in the same building as Oldenburg’s and who was covering everyday objects with stuffed fabric protrusions. Expanding on his plaster sculptures of foodstuffs, Oldenburg’s first three soft sculptures were of a hamburger, a slice of cake, and an ice cream cone, and he went on to craft many more, of objects as wide-ranging as a toilet (which dangles pathetically from the ceiling when installed) and a drum.
set. He also played with motorizing soft sculptures, creating a number of versions of an inflatable ice pack through a collaboration initiated by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Klüver’s groundbreaking program Experiments in Art and Technology, which paired artists with engineers to realize technically difficult projects.

**FLOOR CAKE: ANALYSIS**

*Floor Cake* was one of Oldenburg’s first three soft sculptures, so named, alongside *Floor Burger* and *Floor Cone*, because it sat directly on the floor of the gallery. The decision to forego pedestals, which traditionally elevated sculptures above the ground, allowed Oldenburg to heighten the uncanny experience of objects plucked from ordinary existence and, blown up to sizes larger than life, plunked down in the space of a gallery. (The fact that they were mock foodstuffs made their placement on the floor even a little grotesque.) Oldenburg’s fabric treats sagged and barely held their shape, creating a much different effect than that of the stiff plaster sculptures from *The Store*. Traditional sculpture, for the majority of the history of Western art, had been hard and durable, made from wood, stone, marble, fired clay, and bronze. Oldenburg upended expectations about sculpture, making it instead soft, pliable, and squishy, with an inviting tactility. Importantly, Oldenburg also invested these works with a sense of parody and humor. *Floor Cake* should rightfully elicit a chuckle from its viewers—a result almost never desired of traditional sculpture, which had historically possessed a seriousness and austerity that demanded awe and reverence rather than laughter and amusement. The impact of *Floor Cake*, along with many of Oldenburg’s works, is its ability to make the everyday strange; one might guess that visitors to the early exhibitions of the soft sculptures looked at hamburgers, cakes, and ice cream cones a bit differently thereafter.

Oldenburg did not, in fact, know how to sew, and he relied on his wife, Patty Mucha, a trained seamstress, to assist with every step of the process of making the soft sculptures, from sewing a model out of muslin (a cheap light fabric) to crafting the final work. Unlike Oldenburg’s second wife, Coosje van Bruggen, who has received credit as a collaborator on large-scale monuments and public artworks since they began working together in the 1970s, Mucha was not listed as an artist for the soft sculptures and is usually mentioned only fleetingly in scholarly texts on Oldenburg’s work. The connection between Oldenburg’s turn to soft sculpture and his knowledge of Yayoi Kusama’s contemporaneous explorations with fabric is also rarely discussed. Both omissions are especially interesting given sewing’s typical status as a “feminine” craft and perhaps demonstrate the extent to which the notion of male “artistic genius,” which had dominated the discourse on AbEx painting, was still structuring the discourse of radical art in the 1960s.
WARHOL’S EARLY CAREER

Andy Warhol was born Andrew Warhola in 1928, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Slovakian immigrants. They were not a family of means, but Warhol’s father recognized his son’s artistic talents at an early age and saved money, so he could attend college. Warhol graduated from art school at Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1949 and then moved to New York, where he quickly garnered success as a commercial artist and illustrator. In the 1950s, Warhol’s drawings were displayed in department stores and published in Glamour, Vogue, and other popular magazines; he earned a reputation particularly for his whimsical illustrations of I. Miller brand shoes, and he developed a technique that combined drawing and printmaking to allow him to repeat an illustration as needed and make quick changes to suit clients’ needs. He had his first gallery exhibition in 1952, featuring illustrations for the writings of Truman Capote. Throughout the 1950s, Warhol explored homoerotic imagery, but did not find a broad audience for such work until later in the 1960s and ‘70s, when homosexuality became increasingly accepted in the New York art world.

In the early 1960s, Warhol began making paintings in response to the Pop art movement, initiated in the 1950s in Britain by Richard Hamilton and the Independent Group. Coca-Cola 2 (1961), one of Warhol’s earliest forays into Pop art, shows his work in an important transitional stage. Anchoring the canvas is the image of an iconic glass Coke bottle, imprecisely hand-painted below part of the brand’s logo, and bracketed on both sides with passages of gestural brushstrokes that resemble AbEx painting. The work looks unfinished and messy—a tentative stab at bringing consumer products into dialogue with the hallmarks of modern painting. Within months, however, Warhol adopted a much more straightforward style, with crisp versions of the Coke bottle and logo occupying the entire canvas; he would go on, famously, to create brash, unvarnished paintings of Campbell’s soup cans, which he exhibited at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles for the first time in 1962 (initially resulting in very little critical or financial success). The boldness of Warhol’s approach had been influenced in part by his encounter with the work of Roy Lichtenstein, who had been experimenting with using images from comic strips as references for his paintings. Lichtenstein enlarged and altered cells from a strip and then hand-painted them onto canvas, along with the Ben-Day dot matrix pattern that had enabled the original images to be printed in the newspaper. Warhol had also made paintings based on comic book imagery, but turned to other subjects after seeing Lichtenstein’s work.

WARHOL’S FACTORY

In 1962, Warhol substituted hand-painting with a silkscreen (or screen printing) process borrowed from commercial design, which allowed him to repeat an image many times, ad nauseum. The shift to silkscreen also enabled Warhol to assign a growing fleet of assistants the task of making the actual work, following his designs, which expanded from soup cans and Coke bottles to include reproduced photographs of disasters, race riots, criminals, flowers, and cows. He also made three-dimensional facsimile versions of commercial packing cartons, most famously the brightly colored red-white-and-blue box used by the Brillo company, which made pads for scouring dirty dishes.

From 1962 onward, Warhol referred to his studio as “The
Factory,” reflecting the industrial means of reproduction and labor he utilized to create his work. Renaissance artists had often employed many assistants in workshops to carry out orders for patrons, but Warhol took the relationship between art and commerce and made it more literal, an integral part of his artistic practice reflected both in his working methods and in the kinds of images and objects he produced. The Factory was a symptom of the diminishing importance of the artist’s hand in the production of artworks, a feature that had previously been granted almost mystical qualities and on which the value of singular artworks often rested. Warhol’s Factory rejected the need for the “artist’s touch” and embraced the possibilities of reproducible media instead, allowing Warhol to make more art and distribute it more widely. Methods of reproduction also resulted in artworks that not only bore the image of consumer products, but in fact resembled store-bought items in their serialized production. In that way, Warhol, perhaps more so than any of his fellow Pop artists, was able to mimic in his art the production of images and goods in popular culture.

**MARILYN DIPTYCH: ANALYSIS**

Warhol’s interests in consumerism, seriality, and reproducibility converged in his highly colorful silkscreened celebrity portraits. *Marilyn Diptych*, made in 1962, consists of two silver canvases onto which Warhol has screen printed a publicity photo of the actress Marilyn Monroe fifty times, twenty-five times in streaky grayscale and twenty-five times in a garish palette of acid yellow, purple, orange, and blue. The repetition of Monroe’s image mirrors its ubiquity in popular culture, where photographs of Monroe circulated rapidly in the mass media, especially in the wake of her tragic death, which had prompted Warhol to dedicate a series of paintings to her. Warhol heightens the real-world effects of repetition within the space of his two canvases, numbing viewers to the actress’s mask-like face. Despite this macabre description, Warhol was undeniably enraptured by celebrity culture (especially when tragedy was involved) and created a number of pseudo-celebrities himself, casting members of his entourage in underground films that garnered a cult following.

Although Warhol was undeniably charting new territory with his Pop paintings, he was also responding to various moments in art history. The gridded structure of *Marilyn Diptych* adds to the feeling that Monroe resembles an automaton, as grids tend to imply impersonal mechanical,
mathematical, and permutational systems. In using the grid, Warhol nodded to the pioneers of abstract modern painting, notably Piet Mondrian, and also to more recent gridded paintings, sculptures, and objects by artists such as Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, and Ad Reinhardt, among others. Warhol also cleverly addresses the legacy of AbEx painting in *Marilyn Diptych* by creating a monumental picture blanketed with Monroe’s image, which achieves the “all-over” quality AbEx painters had sought earlier, without their overblown rhetoric.

Warhol, by contrast, was notoriously deadpan in his affect and favored irony over sincerity and conviction. Summing up his interest in the democratizing promise of using everyday, iconic images, Warhol said, “What’s great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the president drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking.”

Nam June Paik is credited with having invented the genre of video art.

**PAIK’S EARLY CAREER**

Nam June Paik was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1932. He trained as a classical pianist in Korea before he was forced to flee the Korean War with his family. They went first to Hong Kong and then settled in Japan, where Paik attended the University of Tokyo and completed a thesis on the influential German composer Arnold Schoenberg (who would later teach John Cage). Paik moved to West Germany after graduating and studied under two composers in Munich and Freiburg, though his most important connections would be made through the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, where he met avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen one summer and Cage the next. In 1959, he debuted a work titled *Hommage à John Cage*, an audiotape that spliced together sound effects, screaming, talking, distorted music, and static. Shortly thereafter he decided to amplify the cacophonous sound he was exploring by adding live performance to the mix, and in 1962, he made the acquaintance of George Maciunas, the self-appointed “chairman” of a burgeoning international art movement called Fluxus, which offered a context for Paik to explore performance further.

After a number of years in Germany, Paik moved permanently to the United States in 1964. He maintained connections with Fluxus and continued performing, often with the cellist Charlotte Moorman. Almost immediately, however, he became most concerned with experimenting with new technologies and finding new ways to disseminate art. He is credited with having invented the genre of video art, a category which, in his oeuvre, encompassed everything from sculptural works made from stacked television sets to live broadcasts and feedback loops of musical performances.

**LARGER CONTEXT: FLUXUS IN WEST GERMANY**

Fluxus was founded in 1961 by the Lithuanian-born artist George Maciunas, who had come to the United States in 1948. He inaugurated Fluxus in New York with a short-lived magazine, but developed it much further while stationed with the U.S. Air Force in Wiesbaden, West Germany, beginning in 1962. The name of the group was meant to allude to the fact that everything in the world is
in flux and flow, which informed Maciunas’ emphasis on ephemeral, performance-based events such as concerts and festivals. Though Fluxus events often resembled Happenings in their chaotic, collaborative unfolding, and despite the fact that many artists participated in both Fluxus events and Happenings, Fluxus tended to attract more artists engaged with ideas originating in musical composition and performance.

Maciunas developed Fluxus into a network of international artists, which included, among many others, East Asian-born artists Yoko Ono, Ay-O, Shigeko Kubota, Mieko Shiomi; Americans George Brecht, Emmett Williams, Benjamin Patterson and George Maciunas. Though Fluxus events often resembled Happenings, Fluxus tended to attract more artists engaged with ideas originating in musical composition and performance, and it also, in Maciunas’s hands, had a more revolutionary anti-art ethos. Both forms of performance, however, often invoked everyday activities, sounds, and objects, from washing one’s hair to making a meal, and both often used a score or a set of instructions as the basis for the work of art—a work that could indeed be carried out by anyone, not just a professional artist.

Zen for TV: Analysis

For the 1962 “Fluxus Festspiele neuester Musik” (Fluxus Festival of Recent Music), held in Wiesbaden, Germany, Paik performed a piece titled *Zen for Head*, which had first debuted in 1961 as part of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s concert piece *Originale* (Originals). *Zen for Head* was Paik’s interpretation of a 1960 score written by fellow Fluxus artist and composer LaMonte Young, which consisted of the following sentence: “Draw a straight line and follow it.” To fulfill the score, Paik laid out a scroll of paper on the ground, dunked his head and necktie into a bowl of black ink and tomato juice, and then dragged his inked head along the scroll of paper, creating a (mostly) straight line. In his adaptation of Young’s score, Paik gave the work a name that implicitly referenced East Asian spirituality and the tradition of calligraphy, nodding to his own roots and radicalizing the ephemerality that is often at the core of both Zen philosophy and the practice of calligraphy—both of which are features of everyday life in East Asia, made strange through Paik’s performance.

Paik transformed the concept of *Zen for Head* into other works, notably several variations of a work called *Zen for TV*, which he first created in 1963. *Zen for TV* consists of a (typically) small television displaying only a single line of light, running vertically or horizontally, mimicking the single line Paik created with his own body in *Zen for Head*. Paik made a number of copies of the work himself, sometimes using different television sets, but always manipulating the screen for the same result. The version pictured in your Art Reproductions Booklet was created in 1976, employing the same strategy that Paik had used for his first 1963 version. Bringing the instructional basis of *Zen for Head* full circle, *Zen for TV* has often been recreated using Paik’s diagram and instructions, which detailed how to tinker with the technology inside the television to render the screen into a single line. Many of Paik’s works from the 1960s onward used technology in innovative and creative ways, often turning technology on itself to create unexpected—and from an engineer’s perspective, undesired—effects.
SECTION III SUMMARY

Important Terms

Pop art – an art movement that began in the 1950s in Britain and subsequently gained popularity in America, based on a shared rejection of dominant approaches to art and an embrace of everyday imagery and objects as the basis for representational painting and sculpture; important artists associated with the movement include Richard Hamilton, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, and James Rosenquist.

Combine – a term Robert Rauschenberg invented to describe his own works of art that combined painting and sculpture into new forms; it is a close cousin of the term “assemblage” (see Section IV) and is used art-historically only to describe Rauschenberg’s work.

Screenprinting – a type of stencil-printing popularized in fine art contexts by artists such as Andy Warhol, who used the technique to create paintings as well as editioned prints; to produce a screenprint, also called silkscreen, fabric mesh (made from silk or other materials) is stretched tightly over a frame, the artist blocks out areas that will become negative space in the resulting print, and paint is pushed through the open areas of the mesh onto a substrate. Prior to Warhol, screenprinting was typically only used for commercial purposes.

Fluxus – an international avant-garde network of artists founded in the 1960s by George Maciunas; important artists involved in Fluxus include Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Yoko Ono, George Brecht, Benjamin Patterson, and Robert Watts. Often rooted in experimental music, Fluxus performances were based on scores written and executed by the artists, while many Fluxus objects were instruction-based, allowing the purchaser to fulfill the work.

Key Artists and Artworks

Robert Rauschenberg, Black Market, 1961

- Rauschenberg first discovered his desire to be an artist while in the U.S. Navy, stationed in San Diego.
- While studying at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Rauschenberg met John Cage and Merce Cunningham, who would become important collaborators.
- Rauschenberg developed a new hybrid of painting and sculpture called “Combines” around 1954.

Black Market includes a suitcase placed on the floor that invites museum visitors to take an object and replace it with a personal possession.

The title of the work refers to Rauschenberg “smuggling” everyday objects into the museum, and his invitation to visitors to do the same.

Critics have been skeptical of the effects of interactive or participatory artworks.

Participatory works challenge museum conventions and attitudes toward preservation, engendering ongoing conversations to bridge institutional needs and artistic intention.

Claes Oldenburg, Floor Cake, 1962

- Oldenburg was born in Stockholm, Sweden, but raised from the age of seven in Chicago, Illinois.
- Oldenburg became involved with the Happenings scene in New York in the late 1950s.
- The environment The Street consisted of sculptures made from trash Oldenburg found on the street, set within a gallery strewn with garbage.
- The Store, a collection of painted plaster sculptures of everyday goods, was staged first in a gallery and then in a storefront.
- Oldenburg was likely inspired to turn to sewn fabric for his sculptures by seeing the work of his neighbor Yayoi Kusama.
- Oldenburg’s first three soft sculptures were Floor Burger, Floor Cake, and Floor Cone, so named because they were placed directly on the gallery floor.
- Not knowing how to sew, Oldenburg employed his wife, Patty Mucha, to realize his soft sculptures.
- Across his work, Oldenburg employed humor to challenge the seriousness and rigidity of traditional sculpture.

Andy Warhol, Marilyn Diptych, 1962

- After graduating from art school, Warhol moved to New York and became a successful commercial artist and illustrator.
- Warhol became well known for the drawings he made for advertisements, notably I. Miller brand shoes.
- Warhol began making paintings of consumer...
products in 1961, beginning with paintings of the iconic glass Coca-Cola bottle.

Warhol’s encounter with Roy Lichtenstein’s comic strip paintings inspired him to take a more straightforward, graphic approach in his own work.

Warhol began referring to his studio as “The Factory” in 1962, reflecting the modes of commercial production he was undertaking with the help of assistants.

By 1962, paintings made with a silkscreen process became Warhol’s primary medium because it allowed for quick reproducibility of an image and for someone else to carry out the labor of printing it.

Marilyn Diptych was made shortly after Marilyn Monroe’s death, using a recent publicity photo of the actress.

Warhol responded to the history of art through references to the all-over painting of AbEx and to the grid employed by modernist artists exploring abstraction.

Nam June Paik, Zen for TV, 1963

Paik was born in Korea but was forced to flee with his family in 1950 after the outbreak of the Korean War.

Paik was trained as a classical pianist and wrote his undergraduate thesis on the influential composer Arnold Schoenberg.

After moving to Germany, Paik met John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Paik would later become known as the inventor of video art.

Paik became involved with the movement known as Fluxus, led by George Maciunas, in 1962.

Fluxus staged concerts and festivals that invoked everyday activities, sounds, and objects and espoused an “anti-art” philosophy.

Zen for Head was Paik’s interpretation of a one-line score (“Draw a straight line and follow it”) written by Fluxus artist LaMonte Young.

Paik adapted Zen for Head for other works, including Zen for TV, a television manipulated to show only one vertical or horizontal line of light.

The 1960s was a time of incredibly radical artistic production, but it was also a decade that bore witness to the protests, demonstrations, and riots of the Civil Rights Movement; the ongoing Vietnam War, in which many young American men were drafted and lost their lives or their livelihoods; and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. While the artists discussed in the preceding section responded to the tumultuous moment in which they found themselves by merging art and life through assemblage, Pop, and Fluxus, other artists found it imperative to go a step further and use their work to communicate explicit commentary on current events and politics. The artists discussed below tirelessly created artworks that spoke to specific issues, whether through the medium of sculptural tableaux, painting, or photomontage. While none of them believed that art could single-handedly change society, they all nevertheless believed that art ought to play a role in reflecting society back to itself, showing contemporary life for what it was—and hopefully, in the process, awakening their fellow citizens to injustice, violence, and prejudice.

SECTION IV

The Sixties: Art and Politics

SELECTED ARTWORK: EDWARD KIENHOLZ, THE PORTABLE WAR

Memorial, 1968

KIENHOLZ’S EARLY CAREER

Edward Kienholz was born in Fairfield, Washington, in 1927, and grew up on a wheat farm. He learned carpentry, metalwork, and car repair, all of which he would eventually put to use in making sculpture from found and salvaged objects. Kienholz briefly studied art at two regional colleges, but did not earn a degree. After spending seven years on the road doing odd jobs, from selling used cars and vacuum cleaners to working as an orderly in a psychiatric hospital, he moved to Los Angeles in 1952.

There he became involved in a burgeoning avant-garde art scene, and in 1955 he opened a gallery. In 1957 he founded another gallery, called Ferus, with curator Walter Hopps and poet Bob Alexander. Kienholz left after only a year to focus on his own art practice, but the gallery went on to mount legendary exhibitions, including Andy Warhol’s first solo show on the West Coast as

The artist Edward Kienholz, photographed in 1958.
Kienholz’s early work consisted of relief-collages assembled from materials he collected from the streets of Los Angeles, but he moved quickly to constructing large-scale works that he called tableaux, a French term for a picture, scene, or grouping, which, in Kienholz’s case, felt like it had been ripped from real life. (In French, the word “tableau” is singular, while “tableaux” is plural.) His first such tableau, titled Roxy’s (1961), was a room-sized installation that replicated the interior of a 1940s brothel, complete with a gleaming jukebox and figures Kienholz crafted from bits of discarded junk and flea-market finds. Many of the artist’s tableaux addressed political issues, ranging from abortion to racial violence in the American South. The literalness of Kienholz’s materials compounded his chosen subject matter, leading in several cases to public outcry that condemned his tableaux as obscene, vulgar, and even pornographic.

In 1966, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors threatened to defund the Los Angeles County Museum of Art if it did not remove Kienholz’s tableau Back Seat Dodge ’38 (1964) from view; they struck a compromise under which only adults over the age of eighteen would be allowed to see the interior of the work, which depicted a sexual encounter. Some critics and art historians have found Kienholz’s work to be overly heavy-handed, with a one-dimensional message,16 while others argue, to the contrary, that his tableaux offer powerful, unvarnished commentary on uncomfortable socio-political realities.

**LARGER CONTEXT: FROM ASSEMBLAGE TO TABLEAUX**

Robert Rauschenberg had pioneered post-war assemblage with his Combines, which merged found objects with painted flourishes, bringing together sculpture, everyday life, and the legacy of Abstract Expressionist painting. Kienholz’s subsequent development of assemblage into three dimensions, often at a monumental scale, was similar to Allan Kaprow’s progression from assemblages to environments to Happenings. One of Kaprow’s friends, the sculptor George Segal, who hosted many Happenings on his farm in New Jersey and began making tableaux in the mid-1960s.

Although Kienholz’s work seems insistently material, he also made contributions to the burgeoning movement known as Conceptual art through his Concept Tableaux, begun around 1966. Each work consisted of a paragraph or two describing a proposed tableau; Kienholz simply framed and sold the sheet of paper (which sometimes had an accompanying plaque), and the purchaser could, in theory, realize the tableau according to the description. The majority of the tableaux, however, did not result in three-dimensional works, but rather existed only as ideas through Kienholz’s words.

**THE PORTABLE WAR MEMORIAL: ANALYSIS**

Made in 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, The Portable War Memorial brings the violence of the war into confrontation with symbols of patriotism and small-
town and suburban America. A substantial work in terms of its size, the tableau occupies the entirety of a typical museum gallery. It brings together a disparate series of objects and vignettes, including a life-sized photograph of a hot dog and chili shop placed next to a Coke machine that once dispensed actual bottles of soda; three patio tables and chairs; a replica of the Uncle Sam “I Want You” poster from World War I; a giant blackboard tombstone listing the names of 475 countries that no longer exist; and a grouping of five figures, cast from life, that replicates the famous image of soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima during World War II—except that in Kienholz’s rendition, they are hoisting the flag into one of the patio tables, into the hole where an umbrella would normally be placed. To the left of the faceless soldiers is an overturned trash can that has been given a head and legs, from which emanates the sound of Kate Smith’s famous World War II-era recording of Irving Berlin’s patriotic tune “God Bless America.”

Kienholz unifies the many component parts of The Portable War Memorial by applying a dull aluminum finish to everything, in a poor man’s attempt at creating a bonafide memorial in bronze or marble. The makeshift quality of the work seems appropriate considering the war Kienholz is memorializing is far from over. Memorials tend only to be erected long after a tragic event has passed, making it somewhat extraordinary that Kienholz would construct a memorial while the war was ongoing. The work does suggest, in referencing a number of military conflicts, that it is in fact a lament for war in general, and more specifically for the ability of Americans to carry on normally—eating hot dogs, drinking Cokes—while violent conflict takes place elsewhere in their names. Kienholz, like many artists who desired to highlight and dramatize the implications of war on life at home in America, hoped that his work might help to further mobilize the American public, which had to a certain extent already lost faith in the war but had not yet successfully rallied to demand its end.

**SELECTED ARTWORK: MARTHA ROSLER, RED STRIPE KITCHEN, FROM THE SERIES “HOUSE BEAUTIFUL: BRINGING THE WAR HOME,” C. 1967–72**

**ROSLER’S CAREER**
Martha Rosler was born in Brooklyn, New York. (Rosler has objected to publishing her birthdate because she believes that including it commodifies living artists in a way that is not applied to other professions.)

She graduated from Brooklyn College in 1965 and moved to California in 1968, where she remained until 1980. She received a master’s degree in fine art from the University of California, San Diego, in 1974, and subsequently spent a number of years in San Francisco.
before returning to New York. Both San Diego and San Francisco during that time were hotbeds of the feminist and antiwar movements, with which Rosler became involved as an activist and artist.

In the mid-1960s, Rosler began making photomontages by cutting photographic images from magazines and newspapers and rearranging them into new works. Her series “Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain,” made approximately between 1966 and 1972, deconstructs the way women are represented in mainstream magazines. Some of the photomontages in the series merge women’s bodies with kitchen appliances, while others take clippings of women’s bodies from popular pornographic magazines and insert them into lingerie ads or arrange them into wallpaper. She also took aim at the institutions of art in her montages: in the work Vacuuming Pop Art, or Woman with Vacuum, she depicts a woman vacuuming a hallway populated with well-known works of Pop art, hinting both at the exclusion of women from that art movement and at women’s confinement to domestic roles as representing their marginalization. Rosler’s photomontages are impeccably assembled, remaining complex and aesthetically compelling while also communicating biting social criticism.

In the early 1970s, Rosler took up the fairly new medium of video art and turned the camera on the same conditions of subjugation and inequality that she addressed in her photomontages. Her 1975 video Semiotics of the Kitchen, which remains her best known, is approximately a six-minute-long, black-and-white video in which Rosler, standing in a kitchen, illustrates the alphabet from A to Z, beginning by donning an apron (for the letter “a”) and continuing on by holding up and demonstrating a single utensil for each letter, e.g., “eggbeater” for the letter “e” and “fork” for the letter “f.” Her demonstrations become increasingly violent and humorous, challenging the image of the contented housewife. For the last few letters, she uses only her body to represent them. The work is ultimately a commentary on how the semiotics of the kitchen—the symbolic language that defines the space—is a tool of women’s oppression, which, however, can be harnessed and undermined, as Rosler shows when she finally traces out the letter “z” by aggressively gesturing with a knife as if she were the bandit figure Zorro.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOMONTAGE

When Rosler took up photomontage as a medium for social criticism, she called up a longer history of photomontage that stretches back to its first innovators, the Berlin-based Dadaist artists Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, George Grosz, and John Heartfield. In Paris, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque had experimented with Cubist cut-paper collage as early as 1912, a radical invention that brought scraps of mass culture—whether newspaper clippings or bits of wallpaper—into the realm of fine art, which had to that point excluded non-artistic materials. Several years later in Berlin, Dadaist artists who were looking for a way to intervene in mass culture and criticize the bourgeois establishment turned to the relatively new photography magazines that were being published alongside increasing numbers of photographs in newspapers, and started excising and borrowing photographic...
images as Picasso and Braque had done with texts and patterns. Though it is unclear which of the four Dadaists invented photomontage (all of them claimed it), all used the medium for what they saw as its political potential. Hannah Höch, for example, in her large-scale montage with the elaborate title Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany, combined images of leisure and entertainment with the portraits of well-known political figures, putting them in compromising and irreverent positions that poked fun at the Weimar government.

Rosler’s photomontages also alluded to a more recent precedent than Dada, namely British artist Richard Hamilton’s 1956 photomontage Just what is it that makes today’s homes so different, so appealing?, which is often referred to as the very first work of Pop art. Hamilton uses a domestic interior as his base and pastes on top of it all sorts of images, including what looks like a painting by Jackson Pollock (which becomes a rug) and the proportionally tiny figure of a woman vacuuming the staircase—perhaps a reference for some of Rosler’s feminist photomontages, made a decade later. Whereas the Dadaists used montage to critique society, Hamilton’s work left the question of criticism a bit more ambiguous, an ambivalent attitude that would come to characterize much Pop art.

RED STRIPE KITCHEN, FROM THE SERIES “HOUSE BEAUTIFUL: BRINGING THE WAR HOME”: ANALYSIS

In 1967, in the midst of the Vietnam War, Rosler began a photomontage series she named “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home.” In the series, Rosler combines high modernist design from the pages of so-called “shelter magazines,” dedicated to showing impressive domestic interiors, with photojournalistic images of the Vietnam War culled from newspapers and current events magazines such as Life. Two representative montages from the series amply demonstrate the point Rosler wanted to make. The montage Red Stripe Kitchen shows a pristine white kitchen with a wrap-around countertop laid out with cherry red dinnerware and black appliances—a white, black, and red palette that invokes modernist design and Russian Constructivist montage. In the background, in a hallway that borders the kitchen, two soldiers are hunched over, looking for something on the tiled floors. The jarring juxtaposition literally “brings the war home,” highlighting the absurdity of advertising and valorizing such highly aestheticized modernism in American homes while American soldiers invade the homes of others abroad.

The montage Balloons, so named for the artful pile of balloons that appear in the corner of the elegant living room, shows a Vietnamese woman carrying an injured, half-clad infant up the stairs of the house. This montage and several others from the series recall the phrase “living-room war,” which was applied to the Vietnam War because it was the first American military conflict that the majority of Americans watched unfolding on television, from the comfort of their own living rooms.

Echoing Dadaist John Heartfield’s publication of photomontages on the cover of the German magazine Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (Workers’ Illustrated Magazine).
Magazine), Rosler published her “House Beautiful” montages in underground newspapers that sprang up in the 1960s to publish literature opposing the Vietnam War, thereby reinserting her images into the media from which she had plucked their component parts. Her primary mode of distribution, however, was to make black-and-white photocopies of the works and hand them out at demonstrations. While on the one hand critical of the ability of the mainstream media to mobilize Americans against what she perceived to be an unjust and brutal war, her decision to hand out multiple copies of these photomontages and to publish them in newspapers (rather than exhibit them as singular artworks) speaks to her persistent faith in the ability of mass reproduction and communication to effect change.

**SELECTED ARTWORK: FAITH RINGGOLD, AMERICAN PEOPLE**

**SERIES #20: DIE, 1967**

**RINGGOLD’S CAREER**

Faith Ringgold was born in New York City in 1930. She grew up in Harlem, a predominantly black neighborhood that had given rise to the “Harlem Renaissance,” a movement of African-American art, literature, and music that reached its zenith in the late 1920s, but continued to reverberate throughout Ringgold’s childhood. In 1948, Ringgold enrolled to study art at the City College of New York, but upon discovering that women were not allowed to declare a major in the School of Liberal Arts, she wound up studying art education instead. After graduating in 1955, she taught in the New York City public school system and earned a master’s degree in 1959, after which she traveled with her mother and two daughters to Europe, a trip that gave her the opportunity to see the art of the Western canon in person.

In the late 1950s, Ringgold was making landscape paintings, but when she showed them to gallerist Ruth White in 1963, she was counseled to think about making paintings that were responsive to the political tumult of the moment. As Ringgold recounted later, “Some people might have been upset or hurt by [White’s advice]. But I was happy that she had the courage to tell me that.” She was happy that she had the courage to tell me that.

The encounter led Ringgold to shift course dramatically, and she set about making a series of twenty paintings titled “The American People,” each of which depicts a confrontation between white and black Americans in a uniquely cartoonish, Pop style that also invoked modernist appropriations of African art (specifically the volumetric forms of African wood sculpture) by the likes of Pablo Picasso and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. (Ringgold called her style “Super-Realism.”) Her choice of subject matter for the series was strongly influenced by the writings of James Baldwin, specifically his thoughts on the relationship between white and black people in America and his belief that assimilation was a misguided and even dangerous goal.

Paintings from “The American People” were included in Ringgold’s first solo show at New York’s Spectrum Gallery, but the series was not widely exhibited in the
1960s or after. Ringgold changed course again in the 1970s, shifting to paintings made on unstretched canvas that she called *thangkas*, after a type of Tibetan Buddhist painting that is usually on a scroll that can be rolled up and transported. The *thangkas* led Ringgold, in the early 1980s, to incorporate quilted fabric into her work, an innovation that simultaneously invoked American craft, women’s work (which was often communal), and Southern culture with African roots. (Her great-great-great-grandmother had, in fact, been a slave who made quilts for her plantation owners, giving Ringgold’s turn to quilting a strong biographical charge as well.)

Ringgold arranged fabric fragments around the edges of unstretched paintings and added narrative text, usually stories that she invented and sometimes elaborated across several related works, creating a new hybrid art form for which she remains best known.

Alongside her work, Ringgold joined other artists in protesting the inequitable conditions of the New York art world and became a prominent activist. In 1968 and 1970, she organized demonstrations at the Whitney Museum of American Art to protest the exclusion of women and people of color from their exhibitions. She also co-led a black coalition within the Art Workers Coalition, an organization founded in 1969 to advocate for artists’ rights; although the group included artists of all colors, they made it a top priority to advocate for greater inclusion of black artists in major institutions.

**AMERICAN PEOPLE SERIES #20: DIE: ANALYSIS**

Stretching across two panels, each six feet long and six feet tall, is a jumbled mess of figures, men and women, black and white. The scene is of a bloodbath, a race riot or rebellion like the more than 150 race riots and incidents of civil unrest that took place in the summer of 1967, when Ringgold made this painting as one of the final works in her “American People” series. The gore of the scene engulfs everyone, including the two tiny figures, presumably children, clutching each other in fear at the center. Ringgold’s male aggressors wear crisp business attire—white shirts and black slacks—while her female figures sport mod dresses in shades of yellow, pink, and peach with matching heels. Close attention to the work reveals that only two of the adult male figures (one white, one black) wield weapons, but everybody, even the terrified women and children, is implicated in racial violence, a reality with which many white and black people on the sidelines struggled to come to terms.

While clearly based in the contemporary political moment, Ringgold’s painting also strongly references a number of art-historical precedents, most notably Pablo Picasso’s monumental 1937 canvas *Guernica*, which was on view at the Museum of Modern Art at the time that Ringgold was working on her paintings. *Guernica* memorialized the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War with a topsy-turvy composition of figures very similar to the structure of Die. Ringgold’s painting also reprised elements of the race riot panel in Jacob Lawrence’s well known Great Migration series, in which a number of figures float across the canvas, weapons drawn.

Ringgold invoked these precedents and made them her own, in search of what she has called a “black aesthetic,” as she did with the eighteenth work in the “American People” series, *The Flag is Burning*, which would have invoked the work of Jasper Johns for the art-going public. Whereas Johns claimed to use the flag simply as an instantly recognizable symbol, Ringgold highlights its inherent political content and its controversial status as a sign of patriotism, democracy, and freedom in the 1960s. She was well aware that she was taking significant risks in creating work so explicitly...
Mainstream art was the art of the sixties, despite the ‘revolution’ going on in the street. The art was cool, unemotional, uninvolved, and not ‘about’ anything. Issue-oriented art was dismissed as being naïve, if not downright vulgar. Art was a conceptual or material process, a commodity and not a political platform. Most mainstream artists, black as well as white, agreed on that. To be emotionally involved in art was considered primitive.²²

RECEPTION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART IN THE U.S. IN THE ’60s AND ’70s

Mainstream arts institutions in the 1960s and ’70s often neglected to seek out African-American artists, exhibiting instead primarily white (and male) artists, as Ringgold herself vigorously protested. They did so despite the flowering of artistic production around the Black Arts Movement, which emerged in New York as an offshoot of the contemporaneous Black Power Movement. It began with poet Amiri Baraka’s founding of the Black Arts Repertory Theater in Harlem in 1965 and constituted a latter-day Harlem Renaissance, though with the even more explicit ambition of making black art for black people in order to awaken black consciousness and create the conditions for liberation from racism and prejudice. The movement was primarily literary but inspired many musicians and visual artists as well, including Ringgold.

Powerful arts institutions largely ignored black art at the time (although the Museum of Modern Art, interestingly, mounted a memorial exhibition following Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968), but they have been actively “re-discovering” and exhibiting that history over the last decade, with major traveling shows dedicated to black art in the 1960s and ’70s. Ringgold herself has experienced renewed interest, especially after her “American People” series, which had been largely forgotten since the 1960s, was exhibited at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in 2013. The painting Die was subsequently purchased by the Museum of Modern Art as part of their public effort to recuperate African-American art that has been historically excluded from or minimized in their collection.

SECTION IV SUMMARY

Important Terms

- **Assemblage** – a sculptural work of art made by assembling discrete elements that have been typically found or bought by the artist; Assemblage emerged in the early twentieth century with works by Pablo Picasso and Kurt Schwitters and became popular again in the mid-twentieth century with works by Edward Kienholz, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and others.

- **Tableaux** – a term used to describe large-scale installations made by Edward Kienholz; it draws on a more historical term used to describe paintings (and later photographs) in which figures are arranged in a space to picturesque or dramatic effect, in a way that closes off the viewer from the composition. Kienholz’s tableaux, by contrast, are often made to be directly engaged by the viewer, allowing the viewer to interact with various elements and/or to walk through the space of the installation.

- **Photomontage** – a collage constructed from photographs, typically found by the artist; the medium was first popularized by Berlin-based Dadaists who used it as a form of political expression and protest.

Key Artists and Artworks

Edward Kienholz, *The Portable War Memorial*, 1968

- Kienholz learned carpentry, metalwork, and car repair as a young man.
- Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles mounted legendary exhibitions in the 1960s, including Andy Warhol’s first solo show on the West Coast.
- Kienholz developed an art form he called *tableaux*, which were often room-sized installations of found objects.
- Kienholz’s tableaux courted controversy as critics deemed them obscene and vulgar.
- The progression from assemblage to installation...
also characterized the work of Allan Kaprow, and to a lesser extent George Segal.

Concept Tableaux were paragraphs of text that proposed tableaux that others could manifest in three-dimensional works, although that rarely occurred.

Portable War Memorial dramatizes the impact of the Vietnam War on America and indicts Americans for carrying on as usual while the war raged abroad.


Rosler was involved in the feminist and antiwar movements in California in the late 1960s and early ’70s.

Rosler’s first series of photomontages deconstructed the representation of women in mainstream magazines.

The video Semiotics of the Kitchen shows Rosler reciting the alphabet while assigning each letter to a different utensil or gesture.

Photomontage was invented by the Berlin Dadaists, including Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, George Grosz, and John Heartfield.

Photomontage built on the legacy of Pablo Picasso’s and Georges Braque’s experiments with Cubist collage.

The series “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home” juxtaposes spreads from high design magazines showing domestic interiors with haunting photojournalistic images of the Vietnam War.

The montages from “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home” were originally published in underground magazines opposed to the war, as well as photocopied and handed out by the artist at demonstrations.

Faith Ringgold, American People Series #20: Die, 1967

Ringgold was raised in Harlem in the 1930s, following the flourishing of African-American culture known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Ringgold stopped making landscape paintings when she was advised that she needed to make work responsive to the political moment of the early 1960s.

The series “The American People” consisted of twenty paintings done in a cartoonish, Pop style, each one addressing racial violence and tension in America.

Ringgold achieved fame in the 1980s for her “story quilt” paintings, which combined paintings on unstretched canvas with bits of quilting.

Ringgold was a prominent activist in New York in the 1960s and ’70s, protesting the exclusion of women artists and artists of color from exhibitions at major museums.

American People Series #20: Die depicts a race riot or rebellion like those that occurred the summer the painting was executed.

American People Series #20: Die invokes a range of art-historical references, including Picasso’s monumental painting Guernica and Jacob Lawrence’s “Great Migration” series.

The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and ’70s, in which Ringgold was involved, aimed to create black art for black people in order to awaken political consciousness.

African-American art of the 1960s is being “rediscovered” and exhibited more prominently by major institutions today.
REINHARDT’S EARLY CAREER
Adolph (Ad) Reinhardt was born in 1913 in Buffalo, New York, and subsequently relocated with his family to New York City. His parents were immigrants (from Germany and Lithuania) who, out of their socialist convictions, were attracted to New York by the city’s burgeoning workers’ movement. Reinhardt was a precocious teenager and had already worked as a commercial artist and book illustrator before he enrolled at Columbia University in 1931, where he studied under Marxist art historian Meyer Schapiro. In the 1930s, Reinhardt took painting classes at Columbia’s Teachers College, the American Artists School, and the National Academy of Design, all while continuing to do commercial work on the side. In 1937 he was elected to membership in the group American Abstract Artists and that same year was hired by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project, which paid him a small salary to produce paintings for the next four years. He was represented by Betty Parsons even before she opened her own gallery in New York and had regular exhibitions there beginning in 1946 and continuing until 1965. Before and after a brief stint in the U.S. Navy in the 1940s, Reinhardt studied Asian art history at New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts and became particularly interested in the aesthetics of Zen Buddhism.

Early in his career, Reinhardt had been associated with the New York School. In the 1930s and ’40s, Reinhardt’s paintings were comprised of either colorful biomorphic forms overlapping in harmonious arrangements and floating at the center of the work or interlocking geometric shapes patterned across the entire canvas, usually in a limited palette of three or four saturated colors. His paintings recalled Piet Mondrian’s grids as well as the works of Cubists such as Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris, all of which Reinhardt encountered through imported magazines and, importantly, through the exhibition Cubism and Abstract Art organized at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936. Later he was directly influenced by the work of American...
artist Stuart Davis (and Davis’s habit of listening to jazz music), which compelled him to take up brighter, louder colors. Although Reinhardt’s style shuttled between more organic shapes and hard-edged geometry, he remained wholeheartedly committed to pure abstraction, tilting many works from this period simply Abstract Painting. He believed firmly that art should be created for art’s sake and that art was distinct from everyday life, though he viewed painting as a “responsible social act” and a “direct form of communication.”

**ABSTRACT PAINTING: ANALYSIS**

Reinhardt’s desire to strip away all elements extraneous to the task of painting—a modernist directive articulated most succinctly in the writing of critic Clement Greenberg—led him ultimately to pursue monochromatic abstraction, beginning around 1953. Reducing his paintings to a single color, sometimes with variation in tonal value, allowed Reinhardt to illuminate the most basic elements of painting, namely the canvas and the paint itself. He started with red and blue monochromes with strong contrasts of value, but eventually narrowed his focus, around 1956, to very dark gray and black canvases.

*Abstract Painting*, 1960–61, is paradigmatic of Reinhardt’s last body of work. The painting measures five by five feet (as did all of his monochromes after 1960) and appears, at first glance, to be a square of matte black paint. With attentive looking, however, one begins to see that the square is divided into a grid of nine squares, with the center of the work resembling a cross. What appeared to be solid black is in fact black tinted with other colors. The squares in the corners of the work have a reddish undertone, while the vertical squares at center are blue-black, and the horizontal bar that transects the work is greenish-black. (These nuanced gradations might be difficult to see in the reproduction of the 1960–61 painting, but can be clearly discerned in this example from 1961.) Reinhardt’s extremely subtle tinting results, in part, from his method of draining the oil from his pigments once they have been mixed; the paint remains spreadable but has no shine once it dries on the canvas, which eliminates any reflective, mirror-like qualities that the black paint might have otherwise. The black surfaces instead seem to paradoxically generate light themselves.

Reinhardt succinctly described his black paintings and defined his goals thus:

> A square (neutral, shapeless) canvas, five feet wide, five feet high, as high as a man, as wide as a man’s outstretched arms (not large, not small, sizeless), trisected (no composition), one horizontal form negating one vertical form (formless, no top, no bottom, directionless), three (more or less) dark (lightless) no—contrasting (colorless) colors, brushwork brushed out to remove brushwork, a matte, flat, free—hand, painted surface (glossless, textureless, non—linear, no hard-edge, no soft edge) which does not reflect its surroundings—a pure, abstract, non—objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting—an object that is self—conscious (no unconsciousness) ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art (absolutely no anti—art).28

**FROM THE MONOCHROME TO MINIMALISM**

The last bit of Reinhardt’s mission statement is essential: he wanted to create an art that was entirely interested in itself, not one that was responsive to its surroundings. That attitude toward painting and toward art in general clarifies Reinhardt’s closeness to the rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism and the New York School, though he saw himself at the end of their possibilities—at the end of painting, in fact. As he put it, “I’m just making the last paintings which anyone can make.”29 Retrospectively, however, one understands that Reinhardt’s monochromes formed an essential bridge from modernist painting to Minimalism and Conceptualism, the movements that will dominate the rest of this section. Reinhardt had not been the only artist to take up the monochrome; the very first monochromes, by the Soviet artists Alexander Rodchenko and Kasimir Malevich, were exhibited in the early twentieth-century and “re-discovered” in the post-war period. Robert Rauschenberg had created all-white paintings in the 1950s, while the French artist Yves Klein painted monochromes throughout the 1950s and began exclusively making blue monochromes (in a color he patented) by 1957. Though all of these artists seemed to be making similar statements about the elemental facets of painting, they varied widely in the meaning they attributed to the monochrome.

Presaging the modes and methods that would concern many artists of the 1960s, Reinhardt argued that “the
one direction in fine or abstract art today is in the painting of the same form over and over again. The one intensity and the one perfection comes only from long and lonely routine preparation and attention and repetition." The artists discussed in the rest of this section did not necessarily aim for perfection in their work, and they largely turned away from Reinhardt’s decree that art ought not to “reflect its surroundings.” Minimalists and Conceptualists also often employed other people (craftsmen and assistants) to produce their work, whereas Reinhardt insisted on the act of painting with his own hand. Despite these important differences, Minimalists and Conceptualists took Reinhardt’s monochromes as a point of departure because of their intensity, repetition, abstraction, and reliance on the grid as a compositional strategy. The subtle variations within formal constraints that defined the monochromes became the basis for works by Frank Stella, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and many others.

SELECTED ARTWORK: DONALD JUDD, UNTITLED (STACK), 1967

JUDD’S EARLY CAREER

Donald Judd was born in 1928 in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, and spent his childhood in various cities across the Midwest. He attended high school in New Jersey and enlisted in the army after graduation, serving for a year in the Corp of Engineers stationed in Korea, surveying an airport landing strip and supervising the construction of prefabricated buildings. In 1948 Judd enrolled in classes at the Art Students League in New York; he left a few months later for the College of William and Mary but returned to the Art Students League after only two semesters, already committed to the idea of becoming an artist or architect. Judd subsequently enrolled in the general studies program at Columbia University, graduating with a degree in philosophy in 1953. After being included in several group shows in New York, Judd went back to school at Columbia in 1958 for a master’s degree in art history, studying with, among other well-known art historians, Meyer Schapiro. During that time, he began writing art criticism for the magazine Art News and subsequently wrote for a number of publications dedicated to contemporary art.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Judd primarily made paintings. Initially he created abstract works based on landscapes and then shifted toward a more geometric abstraction. Anticipating his move toward sculptural objects, in 1961 Judd created a relief painting that had curved top and bottom edges, extending the painting out into space and away from the wall. By 1962, Judd abandoned painting altogether and began making
three-dimensional, geometric objects either hung on the wall or placed on the floor. He had his first solo show in 1963, and the following year, he developed some of the forms for which he would become most famous, including his “progressions,” which are discussed further below. Although Judd is commonly called a Minimalist, alongside artists such as Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, and Frank Stella, it should be noted that he rejected the term, which had originally been used as a pejorative.

Today Judd is almost as well known for the spaces he created for his work as for the works themselves. In 1968 he purchased a five-story building in New York’s SoHo neighborhood, a favorite of bohemian artists in the 1960s and ’70s. He lived and worked there and over time created a permanent installation of his own objects as well as those of his fellow artists, including Flavin, whom he met in 1962. Judd later began purchasing properties in the small town of Marfa, Texas, and constructed spaces for living and working there, too. A number of sites in Marfa became permanent installations of work by Judd, Flavin, John Chamberlain, Richard Long, and others, and the town has increasingly developed into an art pilgrimage site over the more than two decades since Judd’s death in 1994.

**JUDD’S ESSAY “SPECIFIC OBJECTS” AND THE DEBATE OVER MINIMALISM**

Judd wrote art criticism early in his career and utilized his reviews of contemporary exhibitions as ways of articulating his own aims as an artist. Published in 1965, Judd’s most influential text, “Specific Objects,” advocated recent artworks that could best be described simply as three-dimensional objects, rather than as paintings or sculptures. Judd goes on to describe a wide variety of works, not all of which would be considered strictly “Minimalist,” but which nevertheless meet Judd’s parameters, chief among them the notion that “three-dimensional work”—as opposed to “sculpture”—is meant to be perceived as a whole object, not as an accumulation of various parts that can be appreciated separately. Judd writes, “The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful.”

The most controversial aspect of Judd’s work, and his writing about it, was his contention that art ought to extend into real space (hence his emphasis on three-dimensionality), where it could engage the conditions of the environment around it, as well as viewers confronting it in space. The modernist art critic Michael Fried took issue with what he saw as the “theatricality” of such an arrangement in an oft-quoted 1967 essay titled “Art and Objecthood.” Fried derides the “stage presence” of Minimalist objects, which, he argues, turns the viewer into an active subject rather than simply a viewer. Minimalist objects are thus anathema to Fried’s modernist convictions, which rely on the parameters of artistic medium to judge what is good (or not so good) art, and also to separate art from other cultural forms (of which theater was one). Judd and Fried argued back and forth about these matters for years, without any resolution as to the legitimacy of Minimalist art.

**UNTITLED (STACK): ANALYSIS**

Produced in 1967, the object Untitled (Stack) consists of twelve units, each of which measures nine by forty by thirty-one inches, installed on a wall vertically with nine inches of space separating each unit. As a complete work, it resembles a sequence of thick shelves that extend from the floor upward to the ceiling at even intervals. Each unit in Untitled (Stack) projects nearly three feet from the wall, giving it a sculptural presence in the gallery. The boxes are precisely manufactured out of galvanized iron, left unfinished on the top and bottom and painted on the sides with emerald green lacquer paint used for custom Harley-Davidson motorcycles. While Judd had by 1967 limited his stacks and “progressions” (stacks arranged horizontally) to a few standard sizes and number of units, he varied their colors and materials, experimenting with vibrant hues that contrasted with the straightforward geometry and anonymity of his boxes.

It is important to note that Judd has stipulated that Untitled (Stack), like his other stacks and progressions, can be altered depending on the height of the ceiling where it is installed; units can even be removed to maintain even distance between them. This flexibility is a sign of the importance of the work as a whole relative to its individual parts, and it also subtly draws attention to the work’s relationship to the architecture of the space. Just as the space between the component parts of the work is integral to its form, so are the various features of the gallery, museum, or domestic space that plays host to the work. While Judd’s interest in serial progression and repetition might be reminiscent of Andy Warhol’s approach to printed imagery, Judd insistently draws...
his work out into three dimensions and subordinates his objects to the demands of architecture. The result is that his objects direct the viewer to consider his or her body in space in relation to the art object and the architecture that contains it.

**LARGER CONTEXT: FABRICATION AND THE ARTIST’S HAND**

Judd’s stacks and progressions have an industrial look and feel owing, in part, to the fact that, beginning in 1964, the majority of Judd’s work was produced by a professional fabrication workshop several blocks from his New York studio. Disavowing traditional craft and the touch of the artist’s hand, Judd thought that he could realize his intentions more fully by employing professionals rather than by continuing to make objects himself. Similar to the way that Dan Flavin produced artworks by drawing diagrams of light pieces that could be assembled by anyone, Judd would draw the work he envisioned and then have it produced to his precise specifications. For both artists (and for many others), this manner of working aligned perfectly with the industrial aesthetic they engaged. This move away from the notion that art is something made in its entirety by an artist strongly influenced the concurrent development of Conceptual art, as we will see, which went even a step further in arguing that the production of the work was in fact secondary to the idea itself.

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**SELECTED ARTWORK: SOL LEWITT, WALL DRAWING 1, 1968**

**LEWITT’S EARLY CAREER**

Solomon (Sol) LeWitt was born in 1928 in Hartford, Connecticut. As a child he attended art classes at the Wadsworth Atheneum and went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in fine arts at Syracuse University in 1949. He served in the Korean War, first in California, then Japan, and finally Korea. After military service, he moved to New York City in 1953 and set up a studio on the Lower East Side. He studied at the School of Visual Arts while also pursuing his interest in design at Seventeen magazine, where he worked on the photostat machine (the precursor to today’s photocopier) and later helped the art department with production, which sometimes entailed creating whimsical illustrations for the magazine. From 1955–56, LeWitt worked in the graphics department of the newly established architecture firm I.M. Pei and Associates (many years before Pei achieved fame for several important buildings in the United States and the controversial glass pyramid at the Musée du Louvre in Paris). From 1960 to 1965, LeWitt worked at the Information and Book Sales Desk at New York’s Museum of Modern Art and also worked as a night receptionist for the museum’s school.

Though LeWitt was not an active critic in the same way as his contemporary Donald Judd, he did write several influential texts clarifying his approach to art-making. In the surprisingly humorous and accessible essay “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” published in 1965, LeWitt wrote:
In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.34

LeWitt’s anti-subjective approach to art-making contrasted sharply with that of most Abstract Expressionist painters, who saw the canvas as an arena for the exploration of ethical, spiritual, and existential concerns that were both personal and universal.

Some of LeWitt’s earliest works in pursuit of these ideas were three-dimensional objects he called “structures,” a term he preferred to “sculpture.” They initially took form, around 1965, as large-scale slabs of painted wood, arranged into geometric shapes that were hung on the wall or that rested simply on the floor, resembling abstract furniture. Around the same time, LeWitt began making what he called “modular structures,” which were lengths of wood (painted bright white) joined to form large open cubes, which were then sometimes joined horizontally or vertically into a series of open cubes. The modular nature of the structures made them appear as if they could go on ad infinitum, while their pristine whiteness made them appear abstract. One of LeWitt’s cubes was included, alongside work by artists such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Dan Flavin, and Tony Smith, in the first major show of minimal art, an exhibition called Primary Structures at New York’s Jewish Museum in 1966. While continuing to make three-dimensional structures, LeWitt began the next phase of his work, making wall drawings, in 1968.

**WALL DRAWING 1: ANALYSIS**

The inaugural exhibition at New York’s Paula Cooper Gallery, which opened in 1968, was organized to benefit the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. The show featured works by fourteen artists, including Carl Andre, Jo Baer, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Robert Mangold, and Robert Ryman, all of whom produced abstract, non-representational art, which might be surprising given how outspoken many were about current political issues. The show’s curators, Robert Huot, Lucy Lippard, and Ron Wolin, wrote a statement in which they pronounced:

> The artists and the individual pieces were selected to represent a particular esthetic attitude, in the conviction that a cohesive group of important works makes the most forceful statement for peace.35

Sol LeWitt was among the artists chosen for the exhibition, for which he created the very first of his wall drawings. LeWitt’s structures had been based on predetermined elements that could be arranged and re-arranged to create a variety of works; his wall drawings operated on a similar principle, carried out according to rules the artist defined in advance. **Wall Drawing 1: Drawing Series II 18 (A & B)** consists of two side-by-side drawings, each measuring forty-eight by forty-eight inches, executed directly onto the wall with graphite pencils. Each square drawing is subdivided into four squares, each of which are comprised of four smaller squares. Each small square—of which there are thirty-two total—is patterned differently, with the squares of the left drawing made up of horizontal and vertical lines, and the squares of the right drawing made up of cross-hatched lines.

The resulting thirty-two variations on tone serve almost as a manual for drawing, representing the permutational possibilities of basic drawing operations. Although LeWitt did not print the instructions for the drawing on the wall itself (as he would do a number of times later on), a viewer would be able to intuit the straightforward directives that generated the work. LeWitt drew the many thin, precise lines of Wall Drawing 1 himself, but it would not be long before he began to employ a number of draftsmen to carry out the wall drawings for him. As
LeWitt had avowed in “Sentences on Conceptual Art,” the hand of the artist was secondary, the idea was the machine that produced the work, and the execution of the work was not paramount—all factors that contributed to LeWitt’s decision to allow his wall drawings to be produced by others. LeWitt would still receive top billing as the creator of the idea behind the work, but it should be noted that he typically credited his draftsmen as well, and most catalogues of LeWitt’s work continue to list under each work the name of the artists who helped realize it.

**LARGER CONTEXT: MINIMALISM’S RELATIONSHIP TO ARCHITECTURE**

Between 1968 and his death in 2007, LeWitt created more than 1,270 wall drawings, a number of which have been re-created since his passing with the blessing of his estate. While LeWitt’s earliest wall drawings were ephemeral, meant to be on view for a few weeks or months and then painted over, he also created drawings later in his career that were permanent or semi-permanent additions to institutional or even domestic spaces. Regardless of their longevity, LeWitt’s wall drawings engaged the architecture of the space in which they were executed, drawing attention to walls, floors, doorways, and ceilings, each of which was differently engaged by each drawing—many of which fluctuated in size and complexity depending on the size of the space.

The relationship between LeWitt’s objects and architecture was noted early in his career, even before the debut of his wall drawings; in 1965, a critic reviewing LeWitt’s first solo show came up with the term “sculptecture” to describe his work. The term did not stick, but it shows how critics of Minimalist sculpture were coming to terms with the ways in which such objects engaged with the spaces where they were exhibited, as Donald Judd’s work and writing had also made clear. LeWitt’s ultimate appeal to architecture—or, more accurately, his desire to bridge the boundaries between painting, sculpture, and architecture—was based in Minimalism’s interest in bodily, spatial experience, as well as in Conceptual art’s interest in the transformative qualities of art contexts such as galleries and museums. Whereas Donald Judd had highlighted architectural space through three-dimensional objects, LeWitt melded his work to the architecture itself, fully engaging its flatness and usual invisibility as a means of drawing attention to it.

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**SELECTED ARTWORK: JOSEPH KOSUTH, ONE AND THREE CHAIRS, 1965**

**KOSUTH’S EARLY CAREER**

Joseph Kosuth was born in 1945 in Toledo, Ohio. He was a precocious child and studied at the Toledo Museum School of Design from age ten to seventeen. He also took private lessons from the Belgian painter Line Bloom Draper, and from 1963 to 1964, Kosuth studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art. In 1964 he received a scholarship to study at the American Center in Paris, where he met some of the foremost Existentialist thinkers and met the artists Alberto Giacometti and Marcel Duchamp. He returned to the United States in 1965 and enrolled at the School of Visual Arts (SVA). While still a student, he befriended Ad Reinhardt, who remained a close friend until Reinhardt’s death in 1967. Together with two friends, Kosuth founded an exhibition space called the Museum of Normal Art in 1967 (the same year he was given a teaching position at SVA), which gave early exposure to his own work as well as the work of artists such as Robert Ryman, On Kawara, and Hanne Darboven, all of whom would become known for their contributions to a burgeoning movement that Kosuth called “Conceptual art.” In 1969, Kosuth became the American editor of the British journal *Art-Language*, which published important early Conceptual works, and also had his first solo exhibition at the preeminent Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. By then he had already been developing for a number of years a cerebral, philosophical approach to art-making, which he...
deepened through more rigorous study of anthropology and philosophy at the Graduate Center of the New School for Social Research in 1971.

"ART AFTER PHILOSOPHY"

In 1969, Kosuth’s engagement with the work of Dadaist Marcel Duchamp, the minimalist objects and critical essays of Donald Judd, and the writings of analytic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein led him to pen an influential series of essays titled “Art After Philosophy,” originally published over three issues of the arts magazine Studio International. In “Art After Philosophy,” Kosuth attempts to define art’s current condition, concluding that “works of art are analytic propositions,” meaning that they are tautological statements of their status as art, as declared by the artist’s intention and the object’s placement in an art context. Kosuth cites Ad Reinhardt’s writings as an important precedent for his own, finding resonance with Reinhardt’s conviction that “art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art as art is nothing but art.” In Kosuth’s words, “art indeed exists for its own sake” and should not perform functions—such as entertainment, visual experience, or decoration—that can easily be performed by other cultural forms. Kosuth finally takes pains to distinguish his own brand of Conceptual art from that of some of his contemporaries, noting that all art is in some sense “conceptual,” but his work (and that of several peers) is conceptual in its intent, meaning that it sets out to investigate the notion of “art” as an idea and does so through a variety of means.

ONE AND THREE CHAIRS: ANALYSIS

Kosuth’s first major conceptual work, One and Three Chairs, executed in 1965, consists of a wood chair, a mounted photograph of a chair, and a mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of “chair.” All three elements are typically grouped closely together, with the wood chair displayed on the floor and the photograph and photographic enlargement of the definition hanging on the wall. Altogether, the elements pose a series of questions that build on one another. What exactly constitutes a chair? Is it the physical object, its linguistic definition, or its (photographic) representation? What is the functional relationship between objects, images of objects, and definitions of (or names for) objects? And finally, what about this arrangement makes it a work of art? Is the chair not simply a chair anymore?

The influence of Marcel Duchamp’s readymades is evident in Kosuth’s work with objects and definitions, as the everyday chair suddenly becomes a different kind of object simply by being entered by the artist into a specific context, namely the art exhibition. The presence of the definition alongside the real thing not only prompts a viewer to consider the gap between the physical reality of an object and language’s ability to describe it, but also then to consider how the definition of art has expanded to the degree that Kosuth’s One and Three Chairs satisfies its terms. Kosuth often subtitled his work “Art as Idea as Idea,” which might seem obtuse but indeed captures what he was trying to do: demonstrate that art itself is a concept unlike any other, but one that can only be defined, frustratingly, in its own terms. The chair, for example, has not changed in any way whatsoever upon entering the gallery or museum, except for the fact that it is now called “art.” The application of the term radically changes the object’s status without its physical form changing one bit; Kosuth abstracts from this movement of the readymade the notion that art has nothing to do with how something looks (with “aesthetics,” that is), and rather everything to do with an artist’s intentions and the contextual frame of the gallery or museum.

The artist Joseph Kosuth. Kosuth wrote an influential series of essays in which he attempted to define art’s current condition.
RUSCHA’S EARLY CAREER
Edward Ruscha was born in 1937 in Omaha, Nebraska. His family moved to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1941. In 1956, Ruscha moved to Los Angeles, where he attended Chouinard Art Institute (now the California Institute of the Arts, called CalArts), from which he graduated in 1960. A year later, he spent several months touring Europe with his family and made a number of small paintings of Art Nouveau street signage in Paris. Upon returning to the United States, Ruscha—paintings in hand—introduced himself to New York gallerist Leo Castelli, who became his dealer a little over a decade later. Once back in California, Ruscha found a way forward after seeing Jasper Johns’ 1955 hybrid painting-sculpture Target with Four Faces reproduced in a magazine. Ruscha began making Pop-style paintings that featured a single word—“oof,” “boss,” “spam”—executed in a cartoonish style against a fairly minimal background. Ruscha has said that he chose words that struck him as particularly American, humorous, and capable of producing multiple meanings. He saw these paintings as transformative: “I like the idea of a word becoming a picture, almost leaving its body, then coming back and becoming a word again.”

Around this time Ruscha also made paintings of gas stations, reduced to their bare geometries and depicted at an exaggerated angle reminiscent of classic Hollywood films, in which buildings were shot from below to make them look imposing and strange. In 1962, Ruscha was included alongside Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Jim Dine, and others in the exhibition New Painting of Common Objects at the Pasadena Art Museum, one of the first exhibitions of what would eventually be called Pop art. Ruscha’s works were in dialogue with Surrealism, historical strategies of trompe l’oeil, and also with the burgeoning Conceptual art movement, which shared Ruscha’s preoccupation with the relationship between text and image.

EVERY BUILDING ON THE SUNSET STRIP: ANALYSIS
Ruscha produced sixteen photo books between 1963 and 1978, issuing them in large editions as a way of eschewing the tradition of limited-edition and handcrafted artist’s books. Every Building on the Sunset Strip was the fourth photobook Ruscha produced, following books documenting gas stations along Route 66 between Oklahoma City and L.A. (Twentysix Gasoline Stations); small fires (Various Small Fires and Milk); and apartment buildings in L.A. (Some Los Angeles Apartments). Each of the books documented something rather banal, grouping together an arbitrary number of simple photographic images with no particular narrative thread or larger argument. Every Building on the Sunset Strip, published in 1966, was no exception: it was an accordion-folded book that, when fully opened, stretched twenty-five-feet long, with a continuous panoramic image of all of the buildings along both sides of Sunset Boulevard in L.A. To photograph the so-called Sunset Strip, Ruscha stood in the back of a pickup truck with his camera while a friend drove; Ruscha chose to work
early in the morning, when there were no pedestrians or traffic to disrupt their filming. As a result, the typically bustling artery—which was in an unincorporated part of L.A. County, allowing its nightlife to flourish—appears in the book as a desolate sequence of storefronts and billboards.43

Though Ruscha has perhaps ironically denied the influence of L.A. on his work, Every Building on the Sunset Strip fully engages L.A.’s car culture, from the manner in which Ruscha produced the photographs to his decision to stitch the images together to create a continuous panorama, mimicking the way that most Angelenos experience the Sunset Strip as they drive along in their cars. (In order to see the full book when opened, one has to physically move along its twenty-five feet, further mimicking a drive down Sunset.) Although Ruscha did not set out to document the city’s streets for historical or archival purposes, he has re-photographed Sunset Boulevard roughly every three years, resulting in an extensive archive of film reels and photographs that were acquired by the Getty Foundation in L.A. in 2011. It is unclear whether the archive constitutes an artwork, but that ambiguity between photographic record and work of art is precisely what Ruscha has cultivated over the course of his career.44

LARGER CONTEXT: WEST COAST CONCEPTUALISM

While artists such as Ruscha and Joseph Kosuth are both referred to as Conceptual artists, the West Coast brand of Conceptualism engaged by Ruscha had a distinct flavor. From the late 1960s into the 1970s, Ruscha, alongside John Baldessari, Allen Ruppersberg, Chris Burden, and many others, produced work that had a cool, ironic tone. Ruscha has said that he desires a head-scratching reaction to his work, a “huh?” moment of disbelief, confusion, and disdain, which is reflected in the work of his West Coast peers as well.45 Ruscha and Kosuth shared an “informational” style, but Ruscha’s work—particularly his photo books—had a deadpan, humorous quality that Kosuth’s cerebral work did not. The influence of Marcel Duchamp loomed large for Ruscha, who had seen Duchamp’s first ever retrospective, rife with deadpan readymades, at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963; Warhol was in the general consciousness as well, having had his first solo show, of Campbell’s Soup Cans, in L.A. the year before. Compared to New York, which was the veritable center of the art world in the 1960s, L.A. was often considered marginal and even provincial (Ruscha disavowed its relevance to his work), but it gave rise to a number of important Conceptual practices that engaged themes specific to L.A., from everyday car culture to the spectacle of the Hollywood film industry.46

HAACKE’S EARLY CAREER

Hans Haacke was born in Cologne, Germany, in 1936, just a few years before the outbreak of what would become the Second World War. From 1956 to 1960, he studied at the Staatliche Werkakademie in the town of Kassel, Germany, where he was a student of Stanley William Hayter, an English painter and printmaker. From 1961 to 1962 he studied on a Fulbright grant at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia. In 1965, he moved to New York, where he has lived ever since; he held a teaching position at Cooper Union from 1967 to 2002. Despite the critical acclaim his work has garnered, Haacke has been relatively reclusive. He actively resists being photographed and has given only a few interviews, believing, as a true Conceptualist, that his work should stand on its own, and that he, as an artist, should not be an object of interest.

Some of Haacke’s earliest works borrowed formally from Minimalism while exploiting Conceptualism’s interest in the context in which art is shown. The work Condensation Cube, 1963–65, consists of a sealed plexiglas cube filled with a small amount of water. Responding to exterior fluctuations in light, temperature, and humidity,
condensation forms inside the box, leaving rivulets of water on its sides. Through a fairly minimal, non-didactic gesture, Condensation Cube attests to the impact of context on an artwork’s appearance, presaging the claims made in Joseph Kosuth’s writings about Conceptualism. Haacke would become best known, however, for the work he developed in the late 1960s and has continued to the present day, work that is insistently and explicitly political. Haacke’s turn to such work coincided with his involvement in the Art Workers Coalition, formed in 1969 to protest the Vietnam War and to advocate for the Civil Rights Movement and for the rights of all artists to be represented in civic arts institutions.

NEWs: ANALYSIS

Haacke’s 1969 work News originally consisted of a teleprinter (a proto fax machine or computer terminal) connected to a live feed of political and economic news transmitted from wire services commonly employed by newsrooms around the world. The machine, which bore the logo of United Press International, would spit out lines of news items onto long, narrow spools of paper, which were then cut and affixed to the gallery walls. (In later installations, museums allowed the paper to gather into a pile on the floor, to dramatic effect.) News was first shown in a 1969 exhibition at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York and later that year in a large group exhibition called Prospect in Düsseldorf, Germany. For the German exhibition, Haacke dictated the revised concept as follows:

A telex machine installed in the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle prints all the news communicated by the German press agency DPA. The printouts will be put on display for further reading one day after being communicated, and on the third day the rolls of paper will be labelled and dated, then stored in plexiglass containers. 

In 1970, News was included in an important show titled Software - Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art at New York’s Jewish Museum, which explored the idea of software as a process or a program carried out by a machine or by the audience based on instructions formulated by the artist. Although the show featured works created with the help of computer technology, the premise clearly drew on precedents generated by Minimalist and Conceptual artists who had been working on instructional art (where the machine was mere metaphor) for at least half a decade. Where News diverged to some degree from those earlier works of Minimalism and Conceptualism was in its political implications: Haacke aimed to bring the outside world directly into the gallery, not through engaging the body of the viewer through architectural space (Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt) nor through a fairly didactic treatment of language (Joseph Kosuth) or a deadpan depiction of the everyday (Edward Ruscha), but through a constantly spooling machine that recorded current events as they happened.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

What Haacke was formulating out of his reflections on Minimal and Conceptual art would eventually develop into a robust genre of artistic practice that has been labeled “institutional critique.” The year after creating News, Haacke installed a work in the exhibition Information at the Museum of Modern Art that invited visitors to vote on a current political issue and deposit their answers in one of two transparent ballot boxes in the gallery space. The question he asked visitors was, “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina Policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?” The Rockefeller family, Haacke knew, had not only influenced politics for many decades in New York, they were also major donors to the city’s arts institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art; Governor Nelson Rockefeller himself had served as trustee, treasurer, and president of the Museum’s board.

Many of Haacke’s subsequent works would focus on
these sorts of links between art institutions, arts patrons, and political and economic systems that are often unjust. His work has been censored a number of times, most famously when his planned solo exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum was cancelled in 1971 because museums shied from the troubles they would invite by airing such sensitive (sometimes outright damning) information in their galleries. In a letter to Haacke explaining the cancellation of his show, Thomas Messer, then the director of the Guggenheim, wrote:

...art may have social and political consequences but these, we believe, are furthered by indirection and by the generalized, exemplary force that works of art may exert upon the environment, not, as you propose, by using political means to achieve political ends, no matter how desirable these may appear to be in themselves.49

Although Messer’s view might today seem surprisingly conservative, his position—that politics and art ought to remain separate—was widely held, and had to be constantly battled by artists like Haacke, Faith Ringgold, Martha Rosler, and many others, who believed that art was indeed charged with addressing the urgent political issues of the day, not sideways but head-on.

SECTION V SUMMARY

**Important Terms**

- **Abstract art** – art that does not represent or depict a visual reality, but rather uses shape, color, line, and/or form to achieve a visual effect; in representational works of art, identifiable objects or figures that have been simplified or schematized are often referred to as “abstracted.” “Pure abstraction,” however, refers only to those works that depict no identifiable real-world objects or figures. Early twentieth-century artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Kasimir Malevich are credited with some of the first works of pure abstraction ever created.

- **Minimalism** – a form of abstract art that developed in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s; important artists associated with Minimalism, also called Minimal art, include Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Sol LeWitt, Frank Stella, and Carl Andre. Minimalist artworks are often characterized by pristine surfaces free of any marks of production (such as brushstrokes); repeating, identical components; geometric shapes; and compositions defined by grids. Minimalists rejected the notion of the artwork as a form of subjective self-expression, and the related concept of the artist as a genius creator.

- **Conceptualism** – art defined by the primacy of the idea behind it, which is considered by the artist to be more important than the work’s finished physical form; influenced in part by the development of Minimalism, Conceptualism—or Conceptual art—emerged as a movement in the 1960s through the work of artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, and John Baldessari. Conceptual artists engaged many different mediums and styles, though their work tends to have an informational, straightforward aesthetic.

- **Monochrome** – an artwork comprised of only one color; monochromes can be paintings or sculptures but have a stark aesthetic as a result of having a uniform color. Monochromes were first painted in the early twentieth century and became popular again in the 1960s in the hands of artists such as Robert Ryman, Ad Reinhardt, and Yves Klein.

- **Institutional critique** – an art practice that aims primarily to critique institutions of art, whether museums, galleries, practices of art criticism, prominent donors, etc.; Hans Haacke pioneered institutional critique through Conceptual and participatory work that drew attention to the hidden politics and economics of art institutions.

**Key Artists and Artworks**


- Reinhardt studied art history at Columbia University under Marxist art historian Meyer Schapiro.
- Reinhardt was associated early in his career with the New York School painters.
The 1936 exhibition Cubism and Abstract Art exposed Reinhardt to the work of Piet Mondrian, Pablo Picasso, and Juan Gris.

Reinhardt firmly believed that art should be created for art’s sake and that art was distinct from everyday life.

Reinhardt began pursuing monochromatic painting around 1953, settling on dark gray and black canvases in 1956.

Reinhardt’s paintings after 1960 all measured five by five feet and featured tinted black grids.

Reinhardt’s emphases on monochrome, repetition, intensity, and perfection influenced the development of Minimalism.

Donald Judd, Untitled (Stack), 1967

Judd served in the Army Corps of Engineers in Korea before attending art school in New York.

Judd’s earliest works were abstract paintings based on landscapes, followed by geometric abstractions.

In 1961 Judd began making relief paintings and by 1962 had abandoned painting altogether in favor of three-dimensional objects.

Judd rejected the term “minimal” or “minimalist” to describe his work.

Judd created permanent installations of his work (and that of his peers) in New York City and in Marfa, Texas.

Judd’s essay “Specific Objects” argued for artworks that were neither painting nor sculpture, that engaged real space and the viewers’ relation to the object.

Critic Michael Fried reacted strongly to Judd’s essay and his work, alleging that it was guilty of rendering art “theatrical.”

Judd’s stacks and progressions could change size depending on the space in which they were installed.

Like other artists of his time, Judd disavowed the importance of craft and the artist’s hand, allowing his work to be built primarily by professional fabricators.

Sol LeWitt, Wall Drawing 1, 1968

LeWitt worked in design at Seventeen magazine while he was studying art in New York.

LeWitt worked in the studio of architect I.M. Pei for one year, from 1955–56.

LeWitt’s essay “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” argued that the idea behind the work was paramount, whereas the execution of the work was a “perfunctory affair.”

LeWitt preferred the term “structure” to “sculpture” and began making three-dimensional objects around 1965, followed by “modular structures.”

LeWitt’s wall drawings were executed based on precise instructions determined in advance.

LeWitt made his first wall drawings himself but later employed draftsmen to execute them instead.

Wall Drawing 1 consists of thirty-two variations in tone derived from basic permutations of simple lines.

The wall drawings drew attention to the architecture that contained them and further linked Minimalism with architecture.

Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs, 1965

Kosuth studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art and in Paris for one year before settling in New York.

Kosuth befriended Ad Reinhardt while still a student and was strongly influenced by his ideas.

Kosuth was the American editor of the British art journal Art-Language, which published important early Conceptual works.

Kosuth’s essay “Art After Philosophy” argued that “works of art are analytic propositions” that announce the work’s status as art.

One and Three Chairs brings together an actual chair, its dictionary definition, and a photographic representation to question the relationships among the three modes of objecthood, language, and visual representation.

Kosuth’s work, like Duchamp’s readymades, drew attention to the ability of context (the museum or gallery space) to change the status of an ordinary object into an art object.

Edward Ruscha, Every Building on the Sunset Strip, 1966

Ruscha moved to Los Angeles in 1956 and attended Chouinard Art Institute.

Ruscha was greatly influenced by the work of Jasper Johns, which inspired him to begin making Pop-style paintings of single words.

Ruscha’s paintings of gas stations depicted them
at dramatic angles, a strategy borrowed from Hollywood films.

Ruscha produced sixteen photo books between 1963 and 1978, issuing them in large editions as a way of eschewing the tradition of limited-edition and handcrafted artist’s books.

Ruscha’s photo books each documented something rather banal, grouping together simple photographic images with no particular narrative thread or larger argument.

Ruscha’s book *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* engages with L.A. car culture in its subject matter, means of production, and means of reception.

Ruscha’s Conceptualism had a cool, ironic tone—inspired by Duchamp and Warhol—that he shared with a number of other artists working in California in the 1960s and ’70s.


Hans Haacke was born in Cologne, Germany, and moved to New York permanently in 1965.

Haacke’s earliest works borrowed from both Minimalism and Conceptualism to explore the context in which art is shown.

The object *Condensation Cube* responds to changes in gallery conditions, including light, temperature, and humidity.

Haacke was involved with the formation of the Art Workers Coalition in 1969.

News originally featured a teleprinter that spit out lines of news items on spooled paper that was cut down each day and put on display, bringing the political events of the day into the gallery space.

As an instruction-based work, *News* drew on Minimal and Conceptual gestures from the mid to late 1960s but made a more explicitly political statement.

Haacke’s work would develop into a new genre called “institutional critique,” which investigates the links between art institutions, arts patrons, and political and economic systems that are often unjust.

Haacke’s work was famously censored in 1971 when his solo show at the Guggenheim Museum was cancelled due to his explicitly political work.
Eva Hesse was born in 1936 in Hamburg, Germany, to an observant Jewish family. When Hesse was two, her parents, fearing for their lives in Nazi Germany, sent Hesse and her older sister to the Netherlands. The family reunited in England and then made their way to America, settling in New York City in 1939. At the age of nine, Hesse became a U.S. citizen and went on to study art at the School of Industrial Art, Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and Cooper Union. (She also interned at Seventeen magazine but did not meet Sol LeWitt, who was also working there, until 1960.) In 1957, she won a scholarship to the Yale Norfolk Summer School of Music and Art and then studied painting with Josef Albers at the School of Art and Architecture at Yale University, where she graduated with a B.F.A. in 1959.

Hesse moved back to New York that year and began working as a textile designer, while continuing to draw and paint. In 1961, her work was included in exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum and John Heller Gallery, and in 1963, she had her first solo show, comprised entirely of drawings. The following year, Hesse traveled with her husband, sculptor Tom Doyle, to the industrial German town of Kettwig-am-Ruhr, where Doyle had been invited by a prominent textile manufacturer and art collector to work in residence. Hesse took up studio space in part of an old factory and began to make relief paintings and three-dimensional objects with rope, rubber, and other discarded materials. Similar to the trajectories of LeWitt and Donald Judd, she shifted from painting to sculpture by first creating forms that extended from the wall, only later breaking with the wall entirely. Her sculptures were first shown in Düsseldorf in 1965, shortly before Hesse and Doyle returned to New York (and subsequently separated).

She participated in the landmark 1966 exhibition Eccentric Abstraction at the Fischbach Gallery in New York and shortly thereafter, in 1967–68, began making the works for which she would become best known—sculptures constructed with latex-based materials and fiberglass. As her career was progressing rapidly, she was diagnosed in 1969 with a brain tumor and, after several failed operations, died less than a year later in May 1970. Her drawings and sculptures have been widely exhibited since her death, and she is considered among the most influential American sculptors of the twentieth century, despite having only made sculptures for about half a decade.

Hesse’s sculptural work is often categorized as “Post-Minimalist,” a characterization that draws attention to her indebtedness to contemporaneous artists working in the vein of hard-edged, geometric Minimalism as well as to the ways in which she departed from their approach. Minimalism and Post-Minimalism, as loosely structured movements or artistic tendencies, were actually unfolding simultaneously: Primary Structures, Minimalism’s first major exhibition, and Eccentric Abstraction, the first show that attempted to group the Post-Minimalists, were mounted in New York in the very same year. The term “Post-Minimalism,” however, was first coined somewhat retrospectively, in 1971, by the critic Robert Pincus-Witten, who used it to describe the work of a wide range of artists from the mid-1960s onward, including Hesse, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, Lynda
Benglis, Mel Bochner, and many others. Although those artists worked in many different styles in a broad range of materials (from lead sheets to liquid latex to fiberglass), they all distanced themselves from Minimalism’s rationality, anonymity, and its prioritization of the idea or concept behind the work.

Instead, artists like Hesse worked with sometimes difficult, non-traditional materials that determined what would be possible in the finished work, rather than conforming her materials to an entirely pre-determined design. Similarly, Morris worked with long sheets of industrial felt, cutting them into various configurations and then allowing them to hang from hooks on the wall, drooping with the weight of gravity. He referred to this approach as “anti-form” because the material itself dictated how the work would ultimately appear. The tactility and warmth of Hesse’s and Morris’s chosen materials also reflect their desires to move away from the coldness, hardness, and exactness of Minimalism and toward an art that would be more human and more resonant with the body, and that, in the view of many critics, would have a strong psychological and sometimes erotic element as well. Both Surrealist sculpture (of the 1920s and ‘30s) and the early to mid-1960s fabric works of Yayoi Kusama and Claes Oldenburg served as important precedents for Post-Minimalist approaches to sculpture.

**REPETITION NINETEEN III: ANALYSIS**

Hesse’s 1968 work Repetition Nineteen III is comprised of nineteen “buckets” (wide cylinders with closed bottoms), each of which stands between nineteen and slightly over twenty inches tall. They are made of translucent industrial fiberglass, which was originally a clearish-white and has yellowed significantly over time, giving the work a more visceral quality. Each of the buckets has a slightly different shape, with some standing almost perfectly erect and others slumped or crumpled. Their surfaces are bubbly and uneven, distinguishing them further. The buckets sit as a group directly on the floor of the gallery, in a random arrangement that does not resemble a grid, per Hesse’s instructions.

Hesse had begun experimenting with fiberglass in the year prior to making Repetition Nineteen III. Developed in the 1930s, fiberglass (originally patented under the name “Fiberglas”) is a very strong material made of glass fibers (woven into a kind of fabric) adhered to plastic. Fiberglass had been put to many different industrial uses prior to the 1960s, when the Owens Corning glass company realized they could also market such materials to working artists. Hesse worked with a professional fabricator named Doug Johns, who operated a small business dedicated to reinforced plastics, to create almost all of her fiberglass sculptures, including Repetition Nineteen III, which was the third iteration of the same design. Johns created molds that he lined with fiberglass sheets and brushed with a liquid resin that hardened as it cured, leaving the work rigid and translucent once peeled out of the mold. Hesse rejected the first buckets Johns produced because they were perfectly identical, whereas she wanted them each to have a distinct character, which they achieved on the third attempt.51

Like many contemporaneous Minimalists, Hesse was interested in repetition and sameness and in sculptures that had an object-like quality that might be equally familiar and strange. She did not, however, aim for an inorganic, perfect sameness, but rather for a more human imperfection that would be further highlighted by the repetition of form. For Hesse’s 1968 solo exhibition at the Fischbach Gallery, titled Chain Polymers, critic Lucy Lippard wrote:

> The core of Eva Hesse’s art lies in a forthright confrontation of incongruous physical and formal attributes: hardness/softness, roughness/smoothness, precision/chance, geometry/free form, toughness/vulnerability, ‘natural’ surface/industrial construction.52

The human element in Hesse’s work—and in Post-Minimalism in general—was also sometimes connected...
with the burgeoning feminist movement and the so-called Sexual Revolution, which was creating an atmosphere in the U.S. that allowed for more open discussion of sexuality and homosexuality. (The birth control pill, which debuted in 1960, became widespread during this time; the seminal book on women’s health, Our Bodies, Ourselves, was first published in 1971; pornographic and erotic films were shown in wide release for the first time; and abortion was legalized in 1973.) Hesse herself acknowledged the potential sexual connotations in the “empty containers” that comprise Repetition Nineteen III, and her work with viscerally resonant materials no doubt influenced other artists, including Lynda Benglis and Hannah Wilke, both of whom explored sexuality in their work, which often incorporated latex-based products. This set of interests was not exclusive to women artists: Paul Thek, Robert Morris, Scott Burton, and many others were concurrently experimenting with unstable or non-traditional materials and exploring issues around sexuality and gender—concerns that would become even more central to artistic practice in the 1970s.

SELECTED ARTWORK: RICHARD SERRA, GUTTER CORNER SPLASH: NIGHT SHIFT (FORMERLY TITLED SPLASH PIECE: CASTING), 1969/95

SERRA’S EARLY CAREER

Richard Serra was born in San Francisco in 1939. He studied at the University of California at Berkeley and at Santa Barbara, graduating in 1961 with a degree in English literature. During that time, he also began to work in a steel mill to support himself, an experience that would prove to be transformative in his career. He went on to earn a B.F.A. and an M.F.A. from Yale University; in his final year, he worked as an instructor and also assisted Josef Albers on his volume The Interaction of Color. In 1965, Yale awarded Serra a travel fellowship, and he spent a year studying in Paris, followed by travels in Athens and Istanbul, and a Fulbright grant that allowed him to spend a year in Florence, where he exhibited a series of “Habitats” that involved cages of live and stuffed animals.

Returning to the U.S. in 1967, Serra began making sculptures out of rubber and neon tubing, and then out of cast and molten lead, with formal qualities similar to the works of his Minimalist and Post-Minimalist peers. In 1968–69, he signed on with the Leo Castelli Gallery and exhibited a number of lead rolls and props at the Guggenheim Museum and at the Whitney Museum of American Art. These works consisted of lead sheets that had been rolled up and placed on the floor (sometimes in groups of two or three) and sheets and bars of lead that existed in precarious relationships, propped against each other or against the wall in such a way that they seemed likely to collapse at any moment. Simultaneously, Serra began to work on monumental Cor-Ten steel sculptures—the work for which he would become best known—with the support of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He accepted a number of major commissions from the late 1960s onward, most famously to create a public work for Federal Plaza in New York City, where he installed a long torqued wall of steel that grew unpopular and was eventually removed and destroyed, despite Serra’s protestations in court that such an action would violate his First Amendment rights. In addition to making sculptures, Serra has, since the 1970s, been making drawings and prints, often using jet black pigments that convey the same heaviness as his works in metal.

GUTTER CORNER SPLASH: NIGHT SHIFT (FORMERLY TITLED SPLASH PIECE: CASTING): ANALYSIS

Richard Serra executed his first “splash piece”—created by flinging thousands of pounds of molten lead at the “gutter” where a floor meets a wall—in 1968, at gallerist Leo Castelli’s warehouse space in New York for a group exhibition organized by Robert Morris. He created similar works numerous times over the next year, for a solo show at Castelli’s gallery (photographs of which were published in Life Magazine in 1970); outdoors at
the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (with the help of his friend, composer Philip Glass); and in the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland for the landmark exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, which included the work of Hans Haacke, Michael Heizer, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth, and Morris, among many other American and European artists.

In each case, Serra completed the work in situ, allowing the lead to cool and harden in place. The result was silvery lead splashed on the lower part of the wall and emanating outward from the wall across the floor. Although Serra’s act of creation might seem like performance art, or like an extension of Jackson Pollock’s “drip painting,” Serra has clarified, “I saw it as forming a sculpture through a repetitive process.”56 The sculpture revealed the condition of Serra’s chosen material as it hardened, taking the form of the place in which it was created.

The image shown in your Art Reproductions Booklet shows a version of the 1969 work *Splash Piece*. That year Serra installed a splash piece in Jasper Johns’ New York studio, using three thousand pounds of lead. In 1991, Johns donated what remained of the work to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), and in 1995, Serra agreed to re-create the work, to be retitled *Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift*, in the museum’s galleries, where it would become a permanent installation. *Gutter Corner Splash*, which was made over several nights to avoid exposing museum visitors to toxic fumes (hence the work’s subtitle), occupies an entire gallery. It consists of several related parts: lead that has been splashed up the walls and hardened in the “gutter,” along with seven long sculptures formed out of lead Serra flung into the gutter, allowed to cool, pried away from the wall (which had served as a kind of mold), and then arranged neatly on the floor. As with every version of Serra’s lead splashes, the re-creation at SFMOMA relied upon and continues to highlight the architecture of the gallery, imposing itself in perpetuity on the institution, since the part of the work that still exists on the wall and in the gutter cannot be moved without being destroyed.57

**LARGER CONTEXT: “PROCESS” ART AND THE REACTION TO MINIMALISM**

Post-Minimalism is a term that encompasses many subcategories with subtle differences in emphasis. Serra’s early work is typically characterized as “process art,” or art that is concerned primarily with the process of its making and with leaving that process evident in the final product. In 1967, the year before Serra began to make sculptures from splashed molten lead, he wrote a list of verbs in neat script that begins “to roll / to crease / to fold…” and ends, two pages later, with the directive “to continue.” In Serra’s words, “It was important that whatever was finally made reveal its making.”58 The list of verbs, which was published in the Conceptual magazine *Avalanche* and is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, was a way for Serra to emphasize the importance of action in the process of making a work of art and to define his own practice as one of acting upon materials, which distinguished his seemingly minimal objects from the tactics of the Minimalists.

Serra articulated a similar notion in a series of short films he made in the late 1960s, which included a three-minute-long film titled *Hand Catching Lead*, which simply shows a hand catching (or failing to catch) falling clumps of lead. Like the splash pieces, the work is based on a repetitive activity, but one that is done with only partial success, lending the films a subtle psychological charge.59 The films also connect Serra’s “process art” with that of Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, and others who were exploring sculpture, the body, and the act of art-making through the relatively new medium of video. Influential for many of these artists was the prominence of dance in the avant-garde New York scene in the 1960s and ‘70s, which drew attention to the body in ways they translated into artistic practice. Serra attended many performances staged by the important group Judson Dance Theater in the early 1960s and later recalled, “I saw things—in terms of movement and equilibrium, stasis and balance—I could use in my sculpture.”60
HEIZER’S EARLY WORK
Michael Heizer was born in Berkeley, California, in 1944. His father was an archeologist and professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley and had excavated extensively in California, Nevada, and Mexico. When Heizer was twelve, he took a year away from formal schooling to make site drawings for his father on a dig in Mexico. Heizer briefly attended the San Francisco Art Institute from 1963–64 before abandoning school and relocating to New York. There he worked painting lofts while also pursuing his own art. He met Robert Smithson and his wife Nancy Holt, both of whom were interested in working out in a natural landscape rather than making work for a museum or gallery setting. Heizer helped acquaint them with the landscape of the American West and did the same for a number of other artists, including Walter de Maria, who were part of a burgeoning movement called Land art or Earthworks.

Heizer’s work was included in the two earliest exhibitions of Land art, Earthworks at Virginia Dwan’s New York gallery in 1968 and Earth Art, curated by New York artist, critic, and publisher Willoughby Sharp for the museum on the campus of Cornell University in 1969. For the latter, Heizer used a semi-bulldozer to dig a pit that was fifteen feet in diameter and displace the dirt to the side of the pit. Heizer, who is famously cantankerous, withdrew his work from the show, and the displaced dirt was claimed by another artist as his own contribution. Heizer’s relationship with gallerist Virginia Dwan proved more crucial to the development of his career and to the trajectory of Land art in general. The heir to a manufacturing fortune, Dwan was willing to support her artists in whatever they pursued—including the production of monumental unsaleable artworks created in the desert, far from New York City.

FROM MINIMALISM TO LAND ART
Land art or Earthworks was yet another category that fell under the umbrella term Post-Minimalism, highlighting the ways in which Land art grew out of and reacted to the sculptural tenets of Minimalism. As discussed in Section V, Minimalism was concerned not just with geometric abstraction, objecthood, and repetition, but also with architecture and physical space more generally. The art historian Rosalind Krauss, in her influential 1977 book Passages in Modern Sculpture, positioned Land art at the very end of her history. As with Minimalism, she writes, “our bodies and our experience of our bodies continue to be the subject of this sculpture—even when a work is made of several hundred tons of earth.” In Krauss’s view, the point of Heizer’s and Smithson’s work in the landscape is to offer a particular experience that de-centers and disorients our bodies, a project that began long before Minimalism but reached its apex in the sculptural practices of the 1960s.

DOUBLE NEGATIVE: ANALYSIS
Heizer’s Double Negative is monumental in scale but quite simple in its form. Situated on the Mormon Mesa in Nevada, the work consists of two sloped gashes that have been blasted out of either side of a small valley. To create Double Negative, Heizer worked with an assistant to blast and remove 240,000 tons of rock, leaving behind two equally sized ramps that face each other like...
mirror images across an expanse. Visitors can stand on the mesa and see both ramps or walk down one of the ramps and look across the valley at the other one. It is significant that one’s view of the work constantly changes and—save for viewing it from an airplane—one can never quite see the entire work at once.

Critic Philip Leider, writing in Artforum in September 1970, recounted visiting the recently completed work with Richard Serra and video and performance artist Joan Jonas. “[Double Negative] took its place in nature in the most modest and unassuming manner,” he wrote, “the quiet participation of a man-made shape in a particular configuration of valley, ravine, mesa, and sky.” Anticipating Krauss’s understanding of the work’s effect on the body, Leider continued, “From it, one oriented oneself to the rest in a special way... The piece was a new place in nature. That seemed to me a risky kind of art: there was a range of consequences in doing it wrong that one wasn’t used to contemplating in relation to art.”

Indeed, the work was not only challenging in its potentially risky relationship to nature, but also in its relationship to the institutions that define the art world. Virginia Dwan had given Heizer the money he needed to finance the work’s production, and she thereby maintained ownership of it, though it was always free and open to the public that might venture out to see it. In the 1980s, however, Dwan donated Double Negative to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in a radical move toward institutionalizing Land art. While Heizer initially rejected any intimation that the work should be maintained, he has since changed his mind and has requested that the museum raise funds to restore the work, which has degraded significantly over its nearly fifty-year history.

### SECTION VI SUMMARY

#### Important Terms

- **Post-Minimalism** – a loose art movement that formed in response to the cold, hard qualities of Minimalism; Post-Minimalist artists, including Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson—who worked in a range of sub-genres, from Process art to Land art—favored more organic materials and forms than those used contemporaneously by their Minimalist peers. As a result, their work was often seen as invested with greater psychological, subjective, or erotic meaning.

- **Process art** – art in which the process of its making is considered an integral aspect of the completed work and is typically left visible in some way; Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings are often considered the source of the post-war artistic interest in process, which informed the work of artists such as Richard Serra, Robert Morris, and Lynda Benglis.

- **Land art** – a genre of art making that began in...
the late 1960s in which art was made directly in the natural landscape or made out of elements of the natural landscape transported to a gallery or museum setting. Also called Earth art, Environmental art, or Earthworks, Land art was pioneered by Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson, and Richard Long, among others.

**Key Artists and Artworks**

**Eva Hesse, Repetition Nineteen III, 1968**

- Hesse studied art at Yale University under the painter Josef Albers.
- Hesse's first solo exhibition in 1963 was comprised entirely of drawings.
- Hesse began making sculptures while living in Germany and working in a studio space located in an old factory.
- Hesse's best-known sculptures are made out of latex-based materials and fiberglass.
- Post-Minimalism is a term that groups a disparate range of artists, including Hesse, who distanced themselves from Minimalism's rationality, anonymity, and prioritization of the idea or concept behind the work.
- The tactility and warmth of Hesse's chosen materials reflected a desire to move away from the coldness, hardness, and exactness of Minimalism.
- Hesse rejected the first versions of Repetition Nineteen III because their shapes were too perfectly identical, whereas she wanted them to have a human, imperfect quality.
- Hesse died, after battling a brain tumor, in 1970.


- Serra earned both his B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees from Yale University.
- Serra began making sculptures out of cast and molten lead, followed by Cor-Ten steel, in the late 1960s.
- Serra executed his first “splash piece,” created by flinging thousands of pounds of molten lead at the “gutter” where a floor meets a wall, in 1968.
- Serra has clarified that he did not see his splash pieces as a kind of performance art, but rather as a way of making sculpture through a repetitive process.
- **Splash Piece: Casting** was originally created in Jasper Johns' studio in 1969 and was re-created at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) in 1995.
- The SFMOMA version of Splash Piece was retitled Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift to reflect the fact that the work had to be created over several nights to protect visitors from toxic fumes.
- Serra’s early work is often classified as “process art,” which falls under the umbrella of Post-Minimalism.

**Michael Heizer, Double Negative, 1969–70**

- Heizer’s father was an archeologist and professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley.
- Heizer briefly attended the San Francisco Art Institute before moving to New York to pursue a career as an artist.
- Heizer’s work was included in the two earliest exhibitions of Land art, Earthworks in 1968 and Earth Art in 1969.
- Gallerist Virginia Dwan supported Heizer and others in their desire to create monumental works in the desert.
- Land art has been positioned as Post-Minimalist in its extension of Minimalism’s interest in space and bodily experience.
- Double Negative is sited on the Mormon Mesa in Nevada and consists of two ramps that Heizer blasted out of the rock on either side of a small valley.
- Dwan donated Double Negative to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in the 1980s.
- Land artists had different attitudes toward the documentation of their work, but most of them relied on photography and film to allow their work to circulate and become known.
This discussion of eighteen works has given us a broad overview of the development of art in the 1960s. The discussion has been located primarily in the United States, reflecting the centrality of New York in the art world after World War II. We have seen how art grew to depart radically from Abstract Expressionist painting, which had dominated the international art scene in the 1950s. In the wake of Jackson Pollock and his fellow New York School painters, artists either took up new mediums—including performance, video, installation, and Land art—or reworked painting and sculpture to give them new resonances in a particularly fraught decade marked by military and political conflict and social change. Many artists worked across several mediums in order to advance their ideas, and quite a few, as we have seen, were active writers as well, extending their influence even further.

The view of the art of the 1960s presented here offers only a small slice of the artistic activity of the time, which was truly diverse and remains, despite the proliferation of movements and terms, difficult to summarize or generalize, especially if we look beyond the U.S. to the many other contexts that fostered artistic achievement. Furthermore, many artists who did not attain public success then are now being rediscovered, complicating and enriching our understanding of the moment even more.

Take this resource guide and the texts in the bibliography as prompts for further reading—and more importantly, further looking, which you should endeavor to do in person if you can. Although the Museum of Modern Art in New York is the largest repository in America for the works of this period, many museums across the country have in their collections impressive examples of works by the artists discussed here. You should try to see them in person and to test the claims made about these works through your own experience. You should, of course, always bear in mind that these works are now roughly fifty years old, and therefore will look different to you than they did to their very first audiences, who found them challenging, exciting, strange, and wonderful, and sometimes even rejected them as too radical altogether.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Ad Reinhardt is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg is born.</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Allan Kaprow is born; Edward Kienholz is born.</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Andy Warhol is born; Donald Judd is born; Sol LeWitt is born.</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Claes Oldenburg is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Jasper Johns is born; Faith Ringgold is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Nam June Paik is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Hans Haacke is born; Eva Hesse is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Edward Ruscha is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Richard Serra is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Michael Heizer is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Joseph Kosuth is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Jackson Pollock begins making “drip paintings.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Footage of Jackson Pollock making drip paintings is broadcast on television.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Theater Piece No. 1 is performed at Black Mountain College.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Jasper Johns meets Robert Rauschenberg, followed by John Cage and Merce Cunningham; Claes Oldenburg becomes an American citizen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Jasper Johns begins making encaustic paintings.</td>
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<td>1954–55</td>
<td>Jasper Johns, <strong>Flag</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Jackson Pollock dies in a car accident; Edward Ruscha moves to Los Angeles.</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>Ferus Gallery opens.</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Jasper Johns’ work appears on the cover of Artnews magazine; Allan Kaprow publishes the essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock.”</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Allan Kaprow, <strong>18 Happenings in 6 Parts</strong></td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Claes Oldenburg exhibits The Street; Sol LeWitt meets Eva Hesse.</td>
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<td>Year(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960–61</td>
<td>Ad Reinhardt, Abstract Painting</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg, Black Market; George Maciunas establishes Fluxus in New York; Edward Kienholz debuts his first tableau, Roxy’s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Andy Warhol establishes “The Factory”; Andy Warhol’s Campbell’s Soup Can paintings are exhibited for the first time; Andy Warhol, Marilyn Diptych; Nam June Paik meets Fluxus Chairman George Maciunas in Germany; Donald Judd meets Dan Flavin; Pasadena Art Museum organizes the exhibition “New Painting of Common Objects.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>President John F. Kennedy is assassinated; Claes Oldenburg, Floor Cake; Nam June Paik, Zen for TV</td>
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<td>1963–78</td>
<td>Edward Ruscha produces sixteen photo books.</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>The Civil Rights Act is signed into law; Nam June Paik relocates permanently to the United States; Donald Judd begins employing professional fabricators.</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>U.S. ground troops arrive in Vietnam; Malcolm X is assassinated; Poet Amiri Baraka initiates the Black Arts Movement; Donald Judd publishes the essay “Specific Objects”; Sol LeWitt publishes the essay “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art”; Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs; Hans Haacke relocates permanently to New York; Eva Hesse begins making sculptures.</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>Edward Kienholz begins making Concept Tableaux; New York’s Jewish Museum organizes the exhibition Primary Structures; Lucy Lippard organizes the exhibition Eccentric Abstraction for Fischbach Gallery; Edward Ruscha, Every Building on the Sunset Strip</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Ad Reinhardt dies; More than 150 race riots and incidents of civil unrest take place across the United States; Faith Ringgold, American People Series #20: Die; Critic Michael Fried publishes the essay “Art and Objecthood”; Donald Judd, Untitled (Stack)</td>
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<td>1967–72</td>
<td>Martha Rosler, Red Stripe Kitchen, from the series “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home”</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated; Edward Kienholz, Portable War Memorial; Donald Judd purchases a building in SoHo; Sol LeWitt, Wall Drawing 1; Eva Hesse, Repetition Nineteen III</td>
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<td>1969–</td>
<td>The Art Workers Coalition is founded; Joseph Kosuth becomes American editor of the journal Art &amp; Language; Joseph Kosuth publishes the essay “Art After Philosophy”; Hans Haacke, News; Richard Serra, Splash Piece: Casting; The space mission Apollo 11 lands on the moon.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1969-70</td>
<td>Michael Heizer, <em>Double Negative</em></td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Eva Hesse dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Andy Warhol dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Donald Judd dies; Edward Kienholz dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Allan Kaprow dies; Nam June Paik dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Sol LeWitt dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Robert Rauschenberg dies.</td>
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38. Qtd. in Kosuth, 15.
41. Qtd. in Tomkins, n.p.
42. Tomkins, n.p.
43. Tomkins, n.p.
44. Tomkins, n.p.
45. Tomkins, n.p.
54. MoMA Highlights, 271.
58. Qtd. in Foster, 7.


Wagner, Anne M. “Another Hesse.” October, vol. 69, Summer 1994, 49–84.