Abstract Expressionist Art and Thought

An Honors Thesis

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ABSTRACT
This curriculum is designed for upper elementary school students (grades 5/6). Designed as four units, the curriculum explores several ways Abstract Expressionism took shape and form during the 1950's. By engaging themselves in the world of the Abstract Expressionist painters, students will better understand change in the world of art as well as in their own artistic and personal growth.

Each unit is comprised of four lessons, one each in the content areas of History, Aesthetics, Criticism, and Production.

In each lesson, students will apply critical thinking and problem solving skills in both cooperative and individual active learning tasks. A continuous reflective journal will assist students in the structuring and communication of their ideas into words.

At the end of the unit, students create two self-directed artworks and an artist's statement, reflecting their gathered understanding of this vital period of Art History.

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Abstract Expressionism is one of the most vital movements in art history. It took the emphasis in art away from representation and moved it towards the expression and emotion that every human holds and can relate to. The movement allowed future artists to look at their content subjectively, and thus communicate the subject in different artistic ways.

Through studying Abstract Expressionism, students will see the importance of abstraction and be able to use this knowledge to create art that fulfills intent subjectively. Students will look at and talk about artistic content, history, and meaning on both a personal and objective level, thus furthering their communication and social interaction skills in the arts. Students will learn of, deal with (through production), and discuss artistic issues that are a part of Abstract Expressionism. This combination of active learning, critical thinking, and creativity will allow students to venture into various aspects of the Abstract Expressionist movement. In general, students will better understand changes in art techniques, products, and ideas by exploring the artists and work of the Abstract Expressionist movement.
INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War had ended and people all over the world were left with confusion and curiosity, Abstract Expressionism found its place in America. Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Adolf Gottlieb, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko were just a few of the artists to show the world a new kind of artistic expression. Full of energy and resistance, their works gave new light to the ideas that Surrealist artists had expressed and new form to the subjects the Cubists portrayed before them. These artists focused more upon personal feelings and attitudes rather than attempting to make art for the people around them. After much difficulty and disapproval, Abstract Expressionism finally proved itself not only in America, but to Europe as well.

Abstract Expressionism found its life among aspects of other well-known painting movements. Its non-objectivity can be traced to Wassily Kandinsky’s painting, and its abstraction back to Arshille Gorky’s expressive works. One may also find roots in the Surrealist movement due to its emphasis on portraying the subconscious and spontaneous in art. Abstract Expressionist art often relied on the primitive nature of life by resorting to simple painting tools and expressing human emotions in a more direct way. These primitive notions provide a strong foundation within the writings of Carl Jung and the artistic methods and lifestyle of the Native Americans.

Abstract Expressionism, also known as the New York School, was the first major school to declare independence from European styles and move towards America. When several European artists, such as Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy, moved to New York City in the early 1940’s, Abstract Expressionism began to take hold among American painters.
of the time. The relocation of these artists was very important to the birth of Abstract Expressionism. Arshille Gorky, an artist said to be one of the first Abstract Expressionists, came to the U.S. from Armenia in 1920, bringing with him abstraction and subjectivity. Hans Hofmann, born in Germany, showed America his abstract paintings full of color, space, and motion. These were only a few of the artists that were to bring new methods and subject matter to the art scene in New York. Abstract Expressionism was first put on the same shelf as European art in 1958 when several works were sent to major European cities in *The New American Painting* exhibit (Cox, 1982, p. 4). On top of its success in America, Abstract Expressionism had crossed international borders and influenced abstract European painters such as Nicolaes de Stael and Georges Mathieu.

**STRUCTURE AND STYLE**

Abstract Expressionism can be divided into two major areas: Action Painting and Color-Field Painting. Both of these areas had their success and were brought into the public domain via Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century Gallery. Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline brought the artistic process of action painting to the light by emphasizing the artist’s role in the painting. The act of creating a work became the content rather than what the artist was actually painting. Color-field painters like Mark Rothko focused more on a form’s role in space, or a color’s role in meaning. This can be seen in his large, monochromatic and meditative works. Even though action painting and color-field painting are two distinct styles of art, many artists combined them in their work. Adolf Gottlieb’s work, for example, shows this combination with the juxtaposition of geometric shapes with quick oriental-like writing.
As you can see, Abstract Expressionism has various meanings among various artists. Some, like Jackson Pollock, looked at it as a method to express an inner need, while others, like Robert Motherwell in his Elegy series, looked at it as a way to communicate to others. Despite this inconsistency, the artists focused on central ideas rather than style. Abstract Expressionist works show evidence of form, space, color, and personal meaning through intensity and tragedy. Some of the artists strove to show resistance, some to develop a personal identity and some to convey an idea. They often are works of art not because of what they look like and show, but because of how they were made.

To Show Resistance

One of the most well known traits of Abstract Expressionism is that it is the art of rebellion. This rebellion took form in two ways. One, the art had to pronounce itself as new and different from previous artistic styles. While Paris faded as the art capital of the world and New York City took over, European influence still had a great impact on the art that was being made. Even though the artists relied on this often Surrealist influence, they also needed to define themselves as a separate entity. Annette Cox wrote in Art as Politics (1982), that in order to understand Abstract Expressionist work, one must understand that they wanted to hold onto the expressive qualities that Surrealism encompassed without completely submitting to them. (p. 9) For example, the Abstract Expressionists hung onto the Surrealist notion of automatism, but they took it a step further to make it their own by adding the importance of accidents.

Although the work of the Abstract Expressionists varied widely, they did agree on a few basic ideas concerning their art. For instance, many felt that "realism lacked means
to address crisis of contemporary world” (Cox, 1982, p. 3). Thus, they departed from objective and realistic imagery and focused on the subjective. The fact that many of the artists viewed the world as being in trouble is very important to understanding the intent of the work. Newman wrote, “Our tragedy is again a tragedy of action in the chaos that is society (it is interesting that this Greek idea is also a Hebraic concept); and no matter how heroic, or innocent, or moral our individual lives may be, this new fate hangs over us” (Leja, 1993, p. 75).

Despite their need to be separate, the Abstract Expressionists did not compose a group of artists to rival that of the Surrealists. Ironically enough, many of them even turned down the opportunity to be a part of a Surrealist group (Cox, 1982, p. 5).

On top of their resistance to Surrealism, the Abstract Expressionists often wanted the world’s view of art to change. Artist Clyfford Still wished to eliminate criticism and interpretation of art altogether (Cox, 1982, p. 1). They wanted to create a revolution, and not solely in the world of art.

The second form of resistance that was a part of Abstract Expressionism was against politics. In the beginning, the art of the Abstract Expressionists was not created with the goal of consumer appeal in mind. Instead of being made as a product in market of buyers, it was made as the product of their physical and psychological journeys.

Harold Rosenberg, a famous critic of Abstract Expressionism, once said that the artists set out to paint away from politics and critics. (Cox, 1982, p. 4) This feeling is evident in the words of the artists as well. Barnett Newman’s writings show this avoidance of “political and aesthetic dogmas” (Cox, 1982, p. 10) when trying to portray meaning in his work.
In particular, the artists were rebelling against capitalism. Many artists believed that their artwork should "show the barren and oppressive nature of modern capitalist society" (Cox, 1982, p. 6). They felt that there was a problem with the way society was operating, and they wanted to communicate this to those around them.

To Show Personal Identity

Abstract Expressionists often had mysterious and/or introverted personalities. Until Hans Nemuth's famous photographs of Jackson Pollock, his painting methods and personality drew a question mark in the public's mind. In Nemuth's Life magazine photographs you find a reserved, serious, and everyday character painting on canvas laid out on the floor of his New York barn. However, the pictures provoke a sense of curiosity in those looking at them. There seems to be something more to Jackson Pollock. This curiosity is one that still is present today, mainly because the artists choose to develop personal identities by their paintings, not their environment. They wanted power, and their way of getting it was through painting. The artists wanted personal recognition. For subject matter, they would dig deep into their subconscious and search within themselves. It was a "desperate effort to discover 'self' or 'reality,'" (MOMA, 1972, p. 15) on in which the artist had to be entirely committed. Harold Rosenberg mentioned that in this self-search, one could also find a sense of national identity. (Cox, 1982, p. 6)

On the other side to finding oneself through painting, there was the urge to avoid any sense of community. Rosenberg noted that action painters, as he called them, created their work in "isolation, struggle, and anguish" (Cox, 1982, p. 4). This solitary nature is part of what made the artists so mysterious.
works that involve flat and undisrupted color. As you can see, color was applied and thought of in several ways, all of which were directly related to the idea that the artist was communicating or expressing.

**Formalization through Juxtaposition**

Lastly, when you combine some of the above elements with other, more improvisational elements, a new juxtaposition occurs, something that is very common in Abstract Expressionist work. A few of the dualities found in the work are tradition versus modernism, geometry versus automatism, romanticism versus classicism, abstraction versus representation, and ambiguity versus clarity. (Seitz, 1983, p. 6) Even though some of these combinations lie more in the ideas of the movement, many of them appear in the work as well. For example, in Adolf Gottlieb’s *The Frozen Sounds Number 1*, he shows both the geometric traits of a circle and the chaotic random qualities of expressive paint application. These dualities become very visible in several artists’ works even though they are not seen right away.

**UNIVERSALITY**

One of the primary aims of the Abstract Expressionists was to reach the human nature of the audience. In 1946, artist Robert Motherwell wrote, “One is to know that art is not national, that to be merely and American or a French artist is to be nothing; to fail to overcome one’s initial environment is never to reach the human” (Seitz, 1983, p. 1). They found that they two best ways to do this was to use rely on human references and human psychology. These human references came in the form of primitive subject matter and painting methods. The psychology aspect came through using spontaneity as an outlet of one’s subconscious thought.
Relating to Primitive Life

Many Abstract Expressionist painters had a high regard for primitive life. They not only reverted to using their art-making methods, but they also looked back to the root of subject matter. Jackson Pollock, who had visited the southwest, was greatly influenced by the sand-painting traditions of the Native Americans. He used their method of working large scale on the ground for many of his signature paintings. He also used non-traditional tools such as sticks, syringes, and house painting brushes.

The primitive ideas of emotion and experience were also very important to many of the Abstract Expressionists. These defined one’s place as a human. This view of looking at humanity as part of a larger context was first noted by critic Harold Rosenberg. This existentialism was directly related to the tragedy that the artists felt society was facing. Many artists, such as Adolf Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, addressed “primitive fears and motivations” (Cox, 1982, p.46) in their work in order to relate to the audience. A viewer can see a transformation of the primitive in Gottlieb’s Alphabet of Terror. He places the viewer in a familiar position by using these primitive references, but then he traps him/her within the composition. This leaves the viewer powerless. An artist like Pollock on the other hand, uses the same sort of violence, but make action a part of the painting for both himself and the viewer. (Leja, 1993, p. 76)

Mark Rothko addressed the inclusion of primitivism in his artwork quite often. He once worked with Adolf Gottlieb to write a letter to the New York Times to explain the primitive in their work:
created by artists such as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Helen Frankenthaler were more expression than illustration.

The term often heard in regards to this improvisational painting technique was automatism. It was a term first introduced by Andre Breton and the Surrealists in the 1920’s. They related it to automatic writing mostly, but it became a very understood concept in the world of art as well. The Surrealists found this automatism in the work of Sigmund Freud (Cox, 1982, p. 17). Artists such as Willem de Kooning felt that this automatism brought out the painter’s subconscious and their true emotions through immediate reality. Through controlled chance, or the action of predicting and utilizing outcomes of spontaneous paint application, the artists could express a part of themselves that could be very difficult to reach and understand.

There was not preoccupation with moral or aesthetic concerns, because the work was not filtered. If it had been filtered by the human mind, it would then become part of the conscious (Sproccati, 1992, p. 224). In The Turning Point (1992), Kingsley wrote that “art which could bypass the control of the conscious mind and tap into this realm would have the potential to communicate directly with the viewer’s unconscious” (p. 18) as well. With this in mind, it is easy to see how a universal audience was reached. If an artist was successful at finding the deepest parts of their own humanity, it could relate to the entire world of humanity. Through this automatic and spontaneous painting method, artists would produce “an image that came out of their souls and could be communicated to everyone, because we all shared a collective unconscious” (Kingsley, 1992, p. 20).

As a result of this automatism, many of the works had compositions that filled the canvas and kept the eye moving. Hans Hofmann relied on this expansion and contraction
of space in his works to keep the eye moving into and out of a painting's space by repeating and overlapping squares of both intense warm and cool colors (Seitz, 1983, p. 64). Mark Rothko viewed movement in a different way. He saw movement as a freedom rather than a force, allowing his compositions to be something that the viewer looks into and at the same time is able to make personal choices as to where the eye can move to and from (Seitz, 1983, p. 67).

MONUMENTALIZATION

A third feature that sets Abstract Expressionism aside from other art is its emphasis on both physical and ideological size. Mark Rothko first comes to mind when discussing size because his most famous canvases were large, but the shapes inside his canvases took up much of the space. This would cause the artwork to "envelope the eye" (MOMA, 1972, p.17) and unite the viewer and the painter.

Not only were the paintings large, the ideas behind them were general and broad. Some believed that they were remaking the world in a new image (Kingsley, 1992, p. 20). Others, like Clyfford Still, addressed open philosophical questions (Cox, 1982, p. 3). This notion of large-scale ideas and work is rooted in the social context of the time. After World War II, extreme visual experiences made traditional subject matter seem pointless or irrelevant to life. So, instead of using it, they turned to focusing on their personal responses the world around them or their own personal revelations. (Kingsley, 1992 p. 21)

MYSTERY

An interesting idea, and commonly overlooked, is how the Abstract Expressionists strove for mystery. To this day, viewers question subject matter found in
Abstract Expressionist paintings. This curiosity and uncertainty was intended. Viewers seldom see that the subject is actually deeply involved, and focus more on the abstraction in the work.

Some of the Abstract Expressionists also left their early work a mystery to viewers by neglecting to title their pieces. Until the late 1940’s, titles were not there to answer the viewer’s questions. Also, the Abstract Expressionists did not write a manifesto of intent. Although many artists collaborated and tried to agree upon their content and intent, one was never reached. Once again, the public, critics, and viewers had nothing to refer to. The artwork was to be defined by the artist’s response, and then later by the viewer’s response, primarily on a subconscious level. It took awhile for people to understand this idea since most of the previous art had been direct and understandable.

CONCLUSION

Abstract Expressionism marked a period of great change in the world of art. The necessity for planned compositions, objective subject matter, and traditional techniques was no longer present. Artists took faith in spontaneity, chance, and their subconscious instead, allowing their work to rely on sometimes unknown inspirations.

The issues brought up in several of the Abstract Expressionist works, were issues that dealt directly with the viewer. The paintings are not stories to be read into the same way by all viewers, nor are they frames of a moment in time meant to be looked back on. The paintings are images that lead the viewer to explore emotion and thought on an entirely personal level, even subconscious level at times. The use of color, line, shape, and form brought shock to art critics and the public, but fulfilled their duty as
transportation to a world that we cannot always portray realistically, because often we do not know what it entails.

Abstract Expressionism can be viewed as a pivotal movement in art history. With the emphasis of spontaneity and monumentalization over subject matter, it opened the door artistically, allowing future artist to further challenge these ideas.

Abstract Expressionism was also followed by an artistic rejection that took the name of Photo Realism, and Photo Realism, too, led to different painting styles once again.

Despite its rise and fall, Abstract Expressionism has maintained its presence in the art world, in Art Education, and in the public eye ever since. The work is revolutionary in that it fundamentally changed the way everyone, not just artists, defined art. This sort of controversy in regards to artistic styles or movements, is what keeps ideas changing and sometimes leads them to into becoming revolutionary movements. Abstract Expressionism was not the first or last of these revolutionary changes. There have been, and will be others.
This curriculum, directed toward upper elementary school students (grades 5 and 6), is composed of four main units and a conclusion lesson. Each unit focuses on a specific type of product or painting technique that was vital to the Abstract Expressionist movement.

Unit 1: Biomorphism and the Subconscious
Unit 2: Spontaneity and the Subconscious
Unit 3: Planned Abstraction
Unit 4: Colorfield Painting

A final conclusion lesson brings the four disciplines of art, history, criticism, aesthetics, and production, together in both a personal and educational way for the students through individual series of works and artists' statements.
CURRICULUM GOALS

PRODUCTION

The students will produce art works using similar subject matter, concepts, and techniques as the Abstract Expressionists.

AESTHETICS

The students will investigate and discuss aesthetic issues that arose as a result of Abstract Expressionist art.

CRITICISM

The students will use the principles of art, the elements of design, and artist intent to analyze and interpret the artwork of the Abstract Expressionists, as well as that of their fellow students.

HISTORY

The students will understand the Abstract Expressionist movement and its intent as part of its social context, artists, and location.
Students of this curriculum will take part in an ongoing reflective journal. Each day, students are free to write art related entries that reflect on issues or content discussed in class throughout the units. With each unit there is one journal question that is designated for the students to respond to during a particular lesson. Additional writings can be added at the teacher, or student's desire. Journal entries will be used in discussion and in the development of student work. They will be assessed primarily on how well they track the students mental inquiry and gain. In the conclusion lesson, journal entries will plan a big role in deciding upon artistic direction. The journal questions that are pre-designated are as follows:

Unit 1- Why is it important to show our dreams or subconscious in our art if it is shown in a way that only makes sense to the artist and not the viewer?

Unit 2- Pretend you were living in the 1940's and just saw your first Jackson Pollock artwork. Would you accept/like it? Why or why not?

Unit 3- Why would an artist combine spontaneity with planning since they stand so strongly on their own both artistically and psychologically?

Unit 4- How do you tell the difference between a legitimate color-field painting and an image that is composed of four different colored rectangular forms, for example? Is there a difference?
UNIT 1:

BIOMORPHISM AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Content
Students will explore the use of biomorphism and abstraction to communicate the subconscious through art. Students will incorporate literature into art production, respond to other students' work in writing, investigate artists that used this technique, and defend personal opinions of art.

Unit Goals
History- Students will analyze the work and life of an Abstract Expressionist artist.
Criticism- Students will respond to art through descriptive writing.
Production- Students will make a connection between surreal literature and abstract imagery.
Aesthetics- Students will use personal opinion to choose and defend artworks according to formal and emotional criteria.

Lesson Sequence
Lesson 1- AESTHETICS
Awards Ceremony: An Attempt to Find the Best Art
Lesson 2- HISTORY
Production Predictions: An Introduction to the Social and Psychological Context
Lesson 3- PRODUCTION
Transforming Words: Using Narration to Show Our Subconscious
Lesson 4- Criticism
Translating Art into Words: Interpreting Artworks
UNIT 1: BIOMORPHISM AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will look at and discuss famous artworks according to use of shape, line, color, narration, emotion, etc.
- Students must decide as groups which artworks will receive certain awards. Students will make a list of reasons why they chose specific works for certain awards.
- Students will explain and defend their choices for award recipients to the rest of the class.

MATERIALS:
- Several artworks by Yves Tanguy, Roberto Matta, Arshile Gorky, and Joan Miro
- Set of awards for each group of three students

PREPARATION:
- Hang artworks up all around the room.
- Have enough "awards" made so that each group gets a set.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students, "When you look around at these paintings, what do you see? Explain how the fact that different people like different things also applies in looking at art and is called - aesthetics. (shapes, color, people, places, objects, lines, etc.) What is a geometric shape? (without referring to an image) What is an organic/biomorphic shape? How can color be expressive? How can artists use line in different ways?

Image 1. Yves Tanguy The Look of Amber

2. Separate students into groups of three. Distribute the set of awards, and a piece of masking tape to each group. Go through the awards so that they understand what to look for. Each set of awards includes:
- Outstanding use of line-"Lovely Lines" award
- Uses the most geometric shapes-"Geo Generator" award
- Uses the most biomorphic shape-"Bio Blizzard" award
- Uses color expressively-"Color Queen" award
Evaluation:
- Group participation
- Completion of list for award choices

Grade Level Up:
- Have students search for paintings that fit awards, like a talent search, rather than choosing from those provided. Display and debate.

Grade Level Down:
- Only have students distribute awards. Then go through and ask for reasons. Eliminate debate.

- Tells a story the best—"Nifty Narrator" award
- Tells us about an object—"Obviously Object" award
- Makes us feel a strong emotion—"Emotive Locomotive" award
- Most spontaneous—"What were you thinking?!" award
- Most planned painting—"Didn't get off track here!" award

3. After awards are distributed to the groups, students must work as a team to agree on which award goes to which image. They must choose one image per award, and they must all agree and be able to explain the choices their group made. They simply tape the award next to the work they choose to win that award. (In order to remember which group placed the awards, have them put their initials on the tape.) Make sure that students write down their reasoning for each award choice.

4. When all groups have placed their awards, have students return to their seats. Each group will now explain their choices briefly.

5. After all the groups have taken a turn, see if there are any differences among award recipients. If there are the groups that differ must try and get the rest of the class to vote for their painting. They must make a list of reasons as to why the class should vote for their painting. They read this to the class as their final plea. After this plea, the students vote on which painting should receive the award. (If all teams vote on different painting, the winner is chosen between the group with the longest list of reasons, or if there is a tie with this the top two groups battle it out.)

6. Inform students that most of the work around them was done by artists that are seen as Abstract Expressionists and Surrealists because of the way that they used shape,
color, narration, line, etc. Explain the importance of subconscious in the paintings, using those awarded “Nifty Narrator” as specific examples.

7. Tell students that they will be keeping a journal for the next few units. They will get a question to address each unit, and may write anything art related in addition to the response they give for the required question. They will get some in class time to write, but are also expected to write outside of class.

   Journal Question #1 - “Why is it important to show our dreams or subconscious in a way that only makes sense to the artist who made the work?”
### Objectives:
- Students will look at the work of Arshile Gorky and answer questions about why it was made, how it was made, who made it, when it was made, etc.
- Students will write predictions about the historical context of an artwork and then compare their predictions with the real history of the piece.

### Materials:
- Several copies of Arshile Gorky’s *Water of the Flowery Mill*
- "Production Predictions" question sheets
- Pencils

### Preparation:
- Make copies of Arshile Gorky’s *Water of the Flowery Mill*

### Procedure:
1. Explain to students the importance of society and time on an artist and his/her work, especially when the Abstract Expressionists rose in the art world.
2. Distribute Arshile Gorky’s *Water of the Flowery Mill* image to groups of students (one per table or every 3 desks) so that they can share the image, but work independently.

![Image 2. Arshile Gorky Water of the Flowery Mill](image2.jpg)

3. Give each student a copy of the "Production Prediction" question sheet to guide his or her exploration of the work. Inform them that there are not right or wrong answers, but they want to try and determine what the real answers to the questions are by looking at the painting.

4. Students work independently WITHOUT resources to answer the questions given to them. After some time has passed, allow
ASSESSMENT:
- Completion of question sheet
- Participation in group discussion

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Have students trade predictions and other students "check" the work by looking up the facts and editing the prediction.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Give students information on cards about 2 artists and have them decide which ones go with which artist by looking at the work.

JOURNAL:
Why is it important to show our dreams or subconscious in our art if it is shown in a way that only makes sense to the artist and not the viewer?

students to find 3 resources to find the correct answers to their questions.

5. After students have finished predictions, provide and/or go over the facts. Ask who got several answers right and how they made those predictions.

6. Discuss similarities and differences between the facts and the students' predictions.

PRODUCTION PREDICTIONS ANSWERS:
1. b
2. b, g - any more with proper reasoning
3. a
4. a
5. a, b, c, d
1. When do you think that this painting was done?
   a. 1917
   b. 1944
   c. 1986
   d. 1998
   Why did you choose that year (time period)?

2. Arshile Gorky had many influences. Look at the image displayed, which artists do you think may have influenced him? You may look up their artwork in the classroom resources.
   a. Paul Cezanne
   b. Joan Miro
   c. George Seurat
   d. Pablo Picasso
   e. Georgia O'Keefe
   f. Mary Cassatt
   g. Wassily Kandinsky
   What do the artist you chose have in common with Gorky?

3. Arshile Gorky moved from Turkish Armenia in 1920 to escape danger during which war?
   a. World War 1
   b. The Civil War
   c. World War 2
   d. The Korean War
   Why that war?

4. Arshile Gorky's artwork tends to take on the look of which of the following:
   a. imagined landscapes
   b. gestural figures
   c. expressive portraits
   d. simple still life set-ups
   Why do you think Gorky's work takes on that appearance?

5. In 1943 Arshile Gorky committed suicide due to which of the following:
   a. a studio fire that destroyed a lot of his work
   b. a divorce from his wife
   c. battling cancer
   d. becoming disabled in an automobile accident
UNIT 1: BIOMORPHISM AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will use surreal literature to guide their production by determining what their found literature means to them, and translating it into image.
- Students will create a pastel drawing that illustrates their found literature using unrecognizable forms that refer to their own subconscious.
- Students will make artistic decisions of shape, color, and content based on their literature.

PROCEDURE:
1. Review the importance of subconscious in the work of Matta, Tanguy, Miro, and Gorky. Explain the literary outbreak of surreal writing that occurred as the art became known.

2. Direct students to use books and/or the Internet to find a poem that they feel has surreal content. In other words, literature with a lot of similies or metaphors that isn't giving the reader a specific image in their mind. Have them write the poem on a sheet of paper so that they can use it as a reference in the future.

3. Gather students to demo area and show pastel techniques of line weight, shading (by layering), blending, and saturation vs. leaving the tooth of the paper show.

4. Send students back to their seats and pass out a piece of scrap drawing paper and a set of pastels to each student. Let them experiment
**Preparation:**
- Make sure pastels are usable and clean
- Have literary resources (of own and from school library) set aside to an area in the classroom

**Assessment:**
- Production rubric

**Grade Level Up:**
- Have students trade predictions and other students "check" the work by looking up the facts and editing the prediction.

**Grade Level Down:**
- Give students information on cards about 2 artists and have them decide which ones go with which artist by looking at the work.

with line, value, blending, texture, and saturation until they are comfortable with the pastels.

5. Pass out a copy of the production rubric to each student and explain assignment. Students must illustrate their found literature using unrecognizable shape (primarily biomorphic) and pastel techniques.

6. Demonstration of how to use biomorphic form to illustrate ideas from literature. Discuss size edges, and shape characteristics. Show students various sketches of different types of form, do some examples of feelings or ideas in class.

7. Allow work time and give assistance when and where needed.
Found Poem used for Image 3

The Birth and Death of the Sun
By Jim Carroll

Now the trees tempt
the young girl below them

each moves off the other's wind
endlessly, as stars from the earth,

stars from the stars.

Found Poem used for Image 4

Untitled
By Emily Dickinson

Either the Darkness Alters-
Or something in the Sight

Adjusts itself to Midnight-
And life steps almost straight.
# Literature-based Pastel Drawings Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Achievement Standards Grade 5</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1, 5.7.3, 5.8.2, 5.13.1</td>
<td>1. Drawing must illustrate a piece of literature using non-objective, or unrecognizable, form.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.2</td>
<td>2. Must use full saturation technique with pastels.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>3. Composition must take up space of paper and meet all edges of the paper or canvas.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1</td>
<td>4. Must show use of principles and elements of design (contrast, emphasis, etc.)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.2</td>
<td>5. Students must use line weights in their image to help define forms or fields of color.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100
UNIT 1: BIOMORPHISM AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS
CRITICAL CRITICISM
TRANSFORMING ART INTO WORDS:
INTERPRETING ARTWORKS

GRADE 5/6

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will write a poem or short story about another student's work based on what the image means to them.
- Students will compare and contrast several works that depict dreams and discuss why the artists may have chosen to show them in the way that they did.

PROCEDURE:
1. Have each student draw a name from the basket. Then, have each student give their artwork (from the previous lesson, to the student that drew their name.
2. Give them the task of writing a poem (max 10 lines) or short story (max half page) about the image. They can use questions like those below to guide their thought.
   - What do you see?
   - What kind of environment has the artist created?
   - How does the image make you feel?
   - What do you think it means overall?

REMEMBER: no negative words or thoughts!

MATERIALS:
- Artworks depicting dreams or unreal stories
- paper
- pencils

PREPARATION:
- Have all the student's names in the class written on a piece of paper and put into a basket

3. Upon completion have the students read their writings aloud (or if they are not comfortable with this, the artist can read the response that their artwork got).
**ASSESSMENT:**
- Completion of poem or short story about another student's work
- Participation in group discussion

**Grade Level Up:**
- Rather than just having the students present the poem or short story, have them interview the artist and present what they find.

**Grade Level Down:**
- Still have students write poems or short stories, but only present them, don't compare to what the artist really intended.

4. Have each student explain the similarities and differences between their work and what was written about it.

5. Did they get the same sort of meaning that you were going for or that your found literature addressed?

6. Show students some other images that depict dreams or stories that couldn't actually happen.
   - How did these artists tell their story?
   - Did any use similar methods that you used?
   - How did they use color to achieve expression? How did you?
   - How did they use form to achieve expression? How did you?

7. Display artworks and poems as an exhibit for the school.
UNIT 2:
SPONTANEITY AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

CONTENT
Students will enter the world of action-painting filled with spontaneity and personal expression. Students will create paintings will untraditional tools, compare and contrast their work with that of a master painter, investigate the formal qualities of spontaneous art, and get to know famous artists through mock interviews.

UNIT GOALS
History— Students will become familiar with famous artists and introduce them to the class.
Criticism— Students will organize and apply artistic thought through detailed questioning.
Production— Students will rely on their subconscious thought to create abstract and spontaneous imagery.
Aesthetics— Students will determine where the line is drawn between a masterpiece and a mistake or accident.

LESSON SEQUENCE
Lesson 1— HISTORY
"Everyone Please Welcome..."
Lesson 2— CRITICISM
Hide and Seek with Willem de Kooning
Lesson 3— PRODUCTION
"We've Lost the Paintbrushes!"
Lesson 4— AESTHETICS
The "I can do that!" Theory
UNIT 2: SPONTANEITY AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will pair up with another student and choose an artist (from a list) that used the action painting technique. They will be conducting interviews based on the artist they choose.

2. Using the given resources (books, articles), one student from each pair will write 5 questions for their artist. The other student will create answers to these questions that are accurate to the artist. Each pair will have to answer the following in addition to their created questions: Artist name, date of birth, and primary style.

3. After students have researched questions and answers, have them format the information they have found into an interview. Use the format of a talk show interview, in which students must introduce the artist, ask questions, converse, and take audience questions. They may be as creative with their
ASSESSMENT:
- Completion of questions and information (written)
- Presentation of information (rubric)

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Instead of having the pairs work together, have each student work individually. One student writes the questions and the other finds info they think they may be asked. Here, there is no collaboration in the pairs until the final presentation where all of the questions and answers will be unknown to each students' partner.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have an interview question session with the entire class. Each student gets to ask a new question and every other student responds in writing.

4. When each pair of students has decided on content and format, allow each pair to present their findings to the rest of the class as a presentation. These may be audio recorded or video-taped for student portfolios or exhibition if desired.
OBJECTIVES:
- Students will look at an artwork and record information about it in regards to shape, color, form, space, and paint application.
- Students must find the painting among two others, all of which are not in view, by asking questions about formal aspects of the work.

MATERIALS:
- Three artworks with at least one by Willem de Kooning (all mounted on board the same size and color.)

PREPARATION:
- have terms posted: shape, color, form, space, paint application

PROCEDURE:
1. Three students will be randomly drawn to act as artists for the activity. These three students will take a seat where everyone else can see them. Each of these students will have the job of holding an artwork and answering the questions of the students.

2. The rest of the class will be given the task of finding which artist is Willem de Kooning (which student is holding the Willem de Kooning image).

3. The students who will be asking the questions get 3 minutes to look at the painting before it is turned around out of their view. In this time, they may write down as much information as they can to help them ask questions or remember the work.

4. After the 3 minutes is up, students take turns asking "yes" or "no" questions only (for a certain amount of time). The questions will be
**ASSESSMENT:**
- participation in questioning

**GRADE LEVEL UP:**
- Have more artworks in front of class for students to question and choose from.

**GRADE LEVEL DOWN:**
- Have only two artworks to choose from.
  Instead of having one long session of questioning, switch paintings and only have students ask one or two before guessing the correct image.

5. When question time is up, the class votes on which person is Willem de Kooning (is holding the de Kooning painting). After a drum roll the student holding the Willem De Kooning image stands up and reveals the painting. Then the others stand and show theirs as well, naming their artist.

6. Repeat with other artists as desired.

Based around form, shape, color, space, and paint application.
**UNIT 2: Spontaneity and the Subconscious**

**PRODUCTION**

"LET THE PAINTBRUSHES!"

**OBJECTIVES:**
- Students must choose a new tool to be their paintbrush, and create a tempera painting using that new tool.
- Students must make artistic decisions based on the process of their work and the effects of the tool that they chose.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Inform students of the various tools that Jackson Pollock used in painting his work. Show photographs of Pollock working with these tools.

2. Inform students that the paintbrushes are lost (really hide them) and that they have to find something new to use. Choose three different tools (not ones that students may use) to use for demonstration. Gather students to a demo area and show some of the different ways that students can use the tools to create different effects in their paintings.

3. Allow students to choose a new painting tool out of a box that you have filled with potential painting tools.

4. Each student will then create his or her own "action-painting" using the chosen tool. They must develop their content as they go along by reacting to the paint and the effects of the tool.

**MATERIALS:**
- box of "tools" including objects like silverware, a stick, a wisk, a ruler, a pop can, a potato masher, wire, a cup, a marble, a shoestring, etc.
- various colors of tempera paint
- paint palettes
- cups for water
- newspaper
- prestretched canvas

**PREPARATION:**
- bag of "tools"
- Photographs of Pollock working with different tools

Image 7. Example of Production task
ASSESSMENT:
- production rubric

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Allow students to find their own tool rather than having them choose from what is provided

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have students think of a feeling to help guide their mark-making.

... (no representation because that would mean they thought it out.)
# New Tool as Paintbrush Paintings Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Achievement Standards Grade 5</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2, 5.7.3, 5.9.2</td>
<td>1. Painting was done was done in acrylic using a new tool found on the list provided, or the tool was approved by the teacher.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.2</td>
<td>2. Recognizable or planned imagery should NOT be present.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>3. Composition must take up space of paper and meet all edges of the paper or canvas.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1</td>
<td>4. Must show that artist used tool in more than one way. (not all using one end of a fork, etc.)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.2</td>
<td>5. Through process, students must react to the qualities of the paint and the surface rather than planning out an image. (formative assessment)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OBJECTIVES:
- Students will look at their own work as well as that of their classmates and compare/contrast it to the work of Jackson Pollock. They will discuss whether or not paintings in which the artist had no intent are art or not.

MATERIALS:
- Jackson Pollock artwork
- Paintings done by animals or created through accident

PREPARATION:
- clear wall for critique if necessary

PROCEDURE:
1. Display the students' products in which they used the new tool. Hang an artwork done by Jackson Pollock in the center of them.

2. Conduct a comparison and contrast critique between the student works and the work of Pollock. Rotate among students having them point out a similarity or difference they see between a student work and the Pollock work. They must comment on only those things which they SEE, not what they think.

3. After students have all had a couple of turns commenting on the work displayed, present the question, "Why is Jackson Pollock's painting so famous if it is so much like those that we all created?" "Can anyone make a painting like Pollock?"

4. During discussion, direct students to think about the time period Pollock worked in. Ask them if a person were to walk through paint and
ASSESSMENT:
- Participation in critique
- Participation in group discussion

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Have each student write a two paragraph comparison/contrast essay on the work of Pollock and one other work displayed.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have each student write 2 similarities and two differences between their painting and that of Jackson Pollock.

JOURNAL:
Pretend you were living in the 1940's and just saw your first Jackson Pollock artwork. Would you accept/like it? Why or why not?

that would be art. Refer to images painted by animals of made solely through accident.
UNIT 3: Planned Abstraction

Content
Students will discover the dualities of Abstract Expressionism through relating objects, images, and literature of the 1940's to each other. Students will find the difference between planned and spontaneous imagery, create artwork exhibiting these two approaches, and responding to works that show both approaches.

Unit Goals
History- Students will be introduced to the objects, artwork, and literature from the time of Abstract Expressionism.
Criticism- Students will discover the similarities and differences between planned and spontaneous work of Abstract Expressionists.
Production- Students will show relationship and connection between spontaneity and planning by combining them in their artwork.
Aesthetics- Students will react to student work and their attempt at combining spontaneity and planning to convey meaning.

Lesson Sequence
Lesson 1- HISTORY
Back to The Good Ole' Days: A Travel Through Time
Lesson 2- CRITICISM
"What's The Difference?": Comparing Spontaneity and Planning
Lesson 3- PRODUCTION
All Mixed Up: Planned and Spontaneous Imagery In Painting
Lesson 4- AESTHETICS
Diamond-Shaped Poems are an Artist's Best Friend
UNIT 3: PLANNED ABSTRACTION

HISTORY BACK TO THE GOOD OLE' DAYS: A TRAVEL THROUGH TIME

Grade 5/6

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will associate objects, literature, art, etc. from the time period of Abstract Expressionism to the society and art that they have studied thus far.
- Students will compare these findings to those that may have taken their place in today's world as we know it.

PROCEDURE:
1. Have students sit in an area where they can all focus on one person or item without distraction.

2. Inform students that you have created a new time machine that allows us to go back and view history by its products.

3. One by one (draw names), have students go into your time machine (a large box, or closet will work best). The more extravagant the time machine is the more fun it will become. Decorate with lights, music etc.

4. As each name is drawn, the student is to enter the time machine and find either an image or a piece of literature to bring back into 2001 with them. (Have many things in the time machine to choose from.) As the students come out of the time machine, have them share their finding with the rest of the class. Use attached info cards to assist with this task.

MATERIALS:
- Large box or closet to serve as time machine
- Literature and art images objects from Abstract Expressionist time

PREPARATION:
- Place objects from above into closet or box and label them with information as to how they are relevant to the times

Image 9. The Ocean Hans Hofmann
Assessment:
- Participation in time machine and sharing of findings

Grade Level Up:
- Have the students research and create time capsules (of the Abstract Expressionist time) on their own to share with the class.

Grade Level Down:
- Assign an object to each student rather than having them choose.

5. Direct the student (and the class) to answer questions like the following:
   - Why was this important?
   - What does it say about the society and times?
   - Is this still important in contemporary society?
   - Who do you think made it (wrote it, wore it, owned it etc.)

6. Leave images, objects, and literature from time machine in the classroom for the rest of the unit (curriculum) to use as a reference, discussion piece, inspiration, etc.
OBJECTIVES:
-Students will compare and contrast a planned Abstract Expressionist work of art (Hans Hofmann) with a spontaneous Abstract Expressionist work of art (Willem De Kooning) by using an activity sheet to guide their thought of the similarities and differences.

MATERIALS:
- Willem De Kooning image
- Hans Hofmann image
- question sheets

PREPARATION:
- have Willem De Kooning and Hans Hofmann piece displayed
- make question sheets

PROCEDURE:
1. Give short background of Hans Hofmann and Willem De Kooning. Display one image from each of the artists and label them with the title, date, media, and size for the students to use in their exploration.

2. Pass out question sheets to guide students in a comparison and contrast exercise of the two images. Remind them to focus on how the elements and principles are used, what emotions are involved, painting technique and subject matter. The goal is for students to find the difference in how the artists painted their image. (Hofmann-planned, De Kooning-spontaneous)

RULE: students cannot state overlapping ideas such as "has variety of color," and "lacks variety of color"

GOOD STATEMENT: on Hofmann piece: Large squares of intense color show element of planning in Hofmann's work.

Image 10. Woman I Willem De Kooning
**Assessment:**
- Completion of question sheet

**Grade Level Up:**
- Have students find one planned and one spontaneous Abstract Expressionist image to compare and contrast.

**Grade Level Down:**
- Have students create lists of similarities and differences, then discuss.

3. Once students have completed their question sheets, open the class to a discussion of what they found. Do the students see the images as more alike or different? Do they have any questions about the artwork that they want to find out?
Directions: In each box below, write 8 or more sentences that tell something about the painting that is *not the same* in the other painting.

**Willem de Kooning**
*Woman I* 1950-1952
Oil on canvas 192.7 x 147.3 cm

**Hans Hofmann**
*The Ocean* 1957
Oil on canvas 152 x 182.5 cm
OBJECTIVES:
- Students will explore a social issue through the creation of their own artworks using the contrast of spontaneity and planning.

MATERIALS:
- oil pastels
- drawing paper
- acrylic paint
- prestretched canvas
- paint palettes
- paintbrushes

PREPARATION:
- set up demo areas and supplies
- make list of contemporary social issues

PROCEDURE:

1. Show students pre-made list of social issues from contemporary society. Direct them to each choose one (everyone must have their own, no duplicates) issue to use in their painting.

2. Gather students in a demonstration area and show them how to sketch their planned imagery. Show ways of using pastels (layering, blending, etc.) to achieve different colors and intensities. (Make sure they understand that the sketches are just plans, not the actual pieces, so detail is not vital, and changes can be made between the sketching phase and the painting phase.

Example of step 2
Planning for Image 11

3. Once students have chosen their issue, they must plan a part of their painting, NOT the entire thing. They must think about the issue and sketch out an abstract image that portrays that issue in some way. They will use oil
ASSESSMENT:
- Production rubric

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Have students choose an artist that used the planned vs. spontaneity technique in his/her work and model their work after that artist.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have the students use the planned image as one layer rather than letting them alter it using spontaneity (keep the techniques separate).

pastels on drawing paper to plan out this part of their painting.

Image 11. Example of Production task addressing prejudice against the homosexual lifestyle

4. Demonstrate acrylic painting techniques. Show how to mix and blend colors on both the canvas and the palette. Show different kinds of brush strokes that can be used.

5. Students will then begin their final acrylic painting in which they combine their planned image (from step 2) with a spontaneous painting technique. They can achieve this combination in many ways. They can show both independently on top of one another (like Image 11, they may make their planned image out of spontaneous marks, etc.)

6. Students must keep their social issue in mind constantly throughout the making of their image in order to keep the theme and concept unified between the two kinds of imagery.
## Planned vs. Spontaneous Paintings

### Assessment Rubric

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<td>1. Painting must be done in acrylic and based on social issue from list provided, or approved by teacher.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2, 5.7.3, 5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>2. Painting must include partial planned image from oil pastel sketches.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>3. Composition must take up space of paper and meet all edges of the paper or canvas.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2, 5.7.3, 5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>4. Painting must include spontaneous painting techniques.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1</td>
<td>5. Oil pastel sketch must be completed before painting is started.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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100
OBJECTIVES:
- Students will write a poem about the work of another student by reacting to the imagery in written rather than spoken words.
- Students will discuss works in regards to artist intent and viewer interpretation.

MATERIALS:
- format for poems
- student names all in a basket

PREPARATION:
- Have all the student's names in the class written on a piece of paper and put into a basket

PROCEDURE:
1. Display all student work on one wall in the classroom.
2. Have each student draw another student's name out of a basket, and keep the name they drew secret.
3. After each student has drawn another's name, have them write a diamond-shaped poem about that person's acrylic painting. Follow the format below:
   line 1 - a one-word equivalent of the image
   line 2 - an action phrase
   line 3 - a simile or metaphor
   line 4 - a single-word summation
4. After all of the students have written their poems, they take turns reading them to the class. After each poem is read, the rest of the class tries to guess which image the writing is about.
ASSESSMENT:
- Completion of poem or short story about another student's work
- Participation in sharing writing and discussion

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Have the students write about several works, not just one.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have students write a free verse poem about the work (keep them more focused on art rather than making a poem sound good)

JOURNAL:
Why would an artist combine spontaneity with planning since they stand so strongly on their own both artistically and psychologically?

5. Discuss images in regards to what they mean to the artist and the viewer. Are the interpretations the same as the intent? Is it important that they match?
EXAMPLES OF DIAMOND-SHAPED POEM

In Response to Image 11

1.
Close
Coming together
Identical like twins
Connection

2.
Separated
Fighting the line in between
Moving as slow as a turtle
Unbalanced

In Response to Image 12

1.
Battle
Working against each other
As different as night and day
Separate

2.
Darkness
Overlapping each other
Quiet like a storm
Confrontation
UNIT 4:
COLORFIELD PAINTING

CONTENT
Students will be challenged by the controversial nature of colorfield painting. Students will sort artworks according to the type of color manipulation they rely on, compose formal artworks using technology tools, will reassemble images by looking at color and painting technique, discuss the importance of intent and meaning in colorfield artwork.

UNIT GOALS
History- Students will find the differences between ways that artists manipulate color in their work.
Criticism- Students will utilize observational skills by reassembling broken up colorfield artworks.
Production- Students will incorporate technology to show color manipulation in their own art production.
Aesthetics- Students will decide the importance of artist intent or conceptual meaning is to a work of art.

LESSON SEQUENCE
Lesson 1- HISTORY
"Where Do I Belong?": Understanding Color Manipulation
Lesson 2- CRITICISM
Puzzle Problems: Reassembling Famous Works
Lesson 3- PRODUCTION
Image Transformation Through Color Manipulation
Lesson 4- AESTHETICS
"Well, What do You Mean?": A Look at Artist Intent
Unit 6: Colorfield Painting

Module 1: History
Module 2: Where Do I Belong?:
Understanding Color Manipulation

Grade 5/6

Objectives:
- Students will be given artworks that use various types of color manipulation and divide these works into the techniques that they use in regards to color.

Materials:
- Artworks using different kinds of color manipulation

Preparation:
- Make sets of visuals that can be separated into the following groups according to how they deal with color:
  spontaneous/expressive (e.g. action paintings)
  precise/realistic (e.g. Renaissance)
  generalized/realistic (e.g. German expressionists)
  formal/abstract (e.g. colorfield)

Procedure:
1. Separate students into groups of two to four students. Make sure that each group has an open area that they can use to spread out visuals for activity.
2. Hand out sets of artworks that illustrate different ways that artists can manipulate color.

   Image 13. Infinity Field Cretan Riztika
   Theodores Stamos

3. Explain color manipulation using visuals that the groups have at their tables. Tell how color can be treated or applied in different ways to achieve different goals.
   (spontaneous/expressive, precise/realistic, generalized/realistic, formal/abstract)

4. Direct students to break images down into groups according to how they used color.

5. Discuss the groups that were created during the activity. Address questions such as:
   Why did this artist use this method?
ASSESSMENT:
- Participation in separation activity

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Using a worksheet for guidance, have students participate in a scavenger hunt to find specific types of color manipulation in the visual arts.

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have entire class work together to separate one set of images.

How is this method related to the concept or meaning of the work? Does the subject matter have anything to do with how the artist manipulated the color?

6. Focus on the group of images that the students chose for formal/abstract. Relate these images to the idea of colorfield painting. Explain the emphasis on formal qualities and manipulation of color. Discuss the importance of having a concept to back up an image. Can an image just be an experiment with color, or does it need a direct meaning?
**OBJECTIVES:**
- Students will find pieces of works that are stylistically similar, and connect these pieces to see the entire work.

**MATERIALS:**
- artwork "puzzles"
- color scheme checklist

**PREPARATION:**
- print out colorfield images, glue to posterboard and cut apart according to the fields of color
- put out resources for students to find images (obtain from local libraries, etc)

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Post large-scale color wheel in a place where the entire class can see it (individual color wheels can be passed out to each student). Review (or introduce) color schemes: complimentary, primary, secondary, tertiary, split complimentary, double split complimentary, monochromatic, analogous, arbitrary

2. Pass out color scheme checklists. Present to the class the task of finding one image for every color scheme. The images must be from the color field painters or deal with color manipulation. Allow students to search Internet, textbooks, resource books and magazines for images. They must record the artist, title of the work, colors in the work and do a small sketch of the piece.

3. Go through color schemes again as a class once checklists have been completed. Have students share the images that they found.

Image 14. *Untitled* Mark Rothko
ASSESSMENT:
- completion of checklist
- completion of style activity

GRADE LEVEL UP:
- Have students find 4 different stylistic attempts to colorfield painting before the style activity

GRADE LEVEL DOWN:
- Have students name the color in the painting and locate them on the color

4. As class is going through the images they found, point out stylistic differences in composition, paint application, etc.

5. Separate students into groups of three. Pass out style activity. The style activity consists of several images (3-5) of colorfield paintings. However, the images have been mounted and cut into pieces along any boundaries between fields of color. For example, Image 14 would be cut into three horizontal strips according to the color separation. The students task is to find all of the pieces that relate stylistically in order to put the painting back together. Once the image is complete, students can flip over each piece for information on that particular artist.

7. Discuss images that are created from pieces. Why did the students put these together? Address stylistic differences between artists. Discuss color choices and their importance to the image. Ask students which artists they think focus on the “color” or the “fields” created by the color.
UNIT 4: COLORFIELD PAINTING

PROCEDURE:

1. Review the colorfield method of color manipulation. Pushing color into large areas, or fields, of color to create a formal composition.

2. Seat students in an area (not at computers) where they can see a computer projection of a demonstration.

3. Demonstrate how to open Photoshop and create a new 8 x 8 inch composition.

4. Show students the how to make shapes using shape tools on toolbar. Remind them that this composition must be based on a principle of art such as emphasis.

5. Show students how to rasterize the shapes once they have the shapes to the size and placement that they want (color can be changed later).

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will create their own colorfield paintings using tools on Adobe Photoshop. They will decide upon colors and forms to use to represent a formal idea in their artwork.

MATERIALS:
- one computer per student
- Adobe Photoshop
- printing paper
- color printer
- colorfield visuals

PREPARATION:
- install Photoshop on every computer
- check printer connections

Image 15. Example of planning stage step
6. Show students how to use paint bucket to change the colors of their shapes once they have been rasterized.

7. Show students how to use smudge tool to manipulate their shapes of color. Note that they may use any size or kind of smudge "brush".

8. Students then go to their own computer and follow these steps for their first composition (teacher checks each step after completion by looking at screens):
   a. create new image at 8 x 8 inches
   b. click on shape tool and create a formal composition using 2-4 shapes (thoughtful process)
   c. print
   d. rasterize shapes
   e. edit colors of shapes using paint bucket
   f. use smudge tool to spread color into new composition (long step)
   g. print

9. Once first image is created, students are to do two more on their own using the same steps and tools.
# Photoshop Colorfield Compositions Assessment Rubric

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<tr>
<th>National Achievement Standards Grade 5</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2, 5.7.3, 5.9.2</td>
<td>1. Image must show creative manipulation of color</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>2. Image must be 8 x 8 inches in size.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.2</td>
<td>3. Image must begin with 2-4 geometric shapes of different color.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1</td>
<td>4. Must show use of principles and elements of design (contrast, emphasis, etc.)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.2</td>
<td>5. Composition of image must change from geometric shape stage to final stage. (circles do not remain circles, etc.)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100


**Objectives:**
- Students will discuss the importance of artist intent in artwork. They will compare the works of art done by animals or children to famous works from the colorfield painters and address questions concerning the thought behind the making of art.

**Materials:**
- Artwork images done by animals or children that are similar to those of the colorfield painters

**Preparation:**
- Post up work done by children or animals (do not label)

**Procedure:**

1. Have artworks done by animals or children displayed around the classroom. Make sure that the students do NOT know that these are not actual colorfield paintings.

2. Have students pick their favorite image. Instruct students to fill out worksheet using their favorite image. Worksheet must address questions like these:
   - Do you know who the artist is or maybe?
   - What do you think the artist was thinking?
   - Do you think the artist was trying to tell the viewer something? If so, what?
   - Why do you think the artist chose the colors he/she did?

3. When students are finished, do a walk through of each piece displayed. If anyone picked it as their favorite, have them share their answers to the questions above, if not, ask the questions to the entire class.
**ASSESSMENT:**
- completion of question sheet
- participation in group discussion

**GRADE LEVEL UP:**
- Have students compare two artworks (one from animal/child stack, one from colorfield painter stack) without knowing who made them. Still address same questions.

**GRADE LEVEL DOWN:**
- Address single question of "What was the artist thinking?"

**JOURNAL:**
How do you tell the difference between a legitimate colorfield painting and an image that is composed of four different rectangular forms for example? Is there a difference?

4. Inform students that every work displayed is not a famous colorfield painting. Go to each work and name the artist (animal or age of child)

5. Ask students if, knowing this, they would change any of their answers.
   - Was the animal/child thinking of a certain thing to paint?
   - Were they trying to tell the viewer something?
   - Did they choose certain colors?

6. Discuss how important it is for the artist to have a message, concept, or intention when creating a piece of artwork. Ask students if the works are still art even if the artist was not thinking about making art.
OBJECTIVES:
- Students will pull together their knowledge and personal interest in Abstract Expressionist art by creating two of their own Abstract Expressionist works.
- Students will write artists' statements explaining their influences and choices.

MATERIALS:
- acrylic paint
- paint palettes
- paintbrushes (other painting tools desired by students)
- prestretched canvas
- word processing program
- computer access

PREPARATION:
- have various tools and resources for students to look at and explore

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform students that they are going to create two paintings. In these paintings, they are going to use their own style of Abstract Expressionism.

2. Tell students to pick two artists that they want to work with and incorporate in some manner into their work.

3. Review previous production assignments to refresh memory of the many kinds of techniques that the Abstract Expressionists used. Present images and examples to students so that they can search for the artist they are most influenced or inspired by.

4. After each student has found their two artists, have them begin on their own acrylic paintings using that artist as a creative guide to the direction of their work. (subject matter, paint application, color, form, etc.)
**Assessment:**
- Production rubric
- Completion of artists’ statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level Up:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Have the students complete a series of paintings (3 or more) each on a different artist and explain the different aspects that they work pulls from</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level Down:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students only make one image and write an artists’ statement about its influences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Either while the students are working on their pieces or after they are finished, they write their own artist’s statement to explain their artworks. They should discuss influences (artists), why they chose to follow those influences and how they made the art their own.

6. Display student work along side their artists’ statements.
# Abstract Expressionist Series Assessment Rubric

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<tr>
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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.2, 5.6.2, 5.7.2, 5.7.3, 5.13.2</td>
<td>1. Paintings must show connection to Abstract Expressionist artists mentioned in artist’s statement alongside a personal attempt to Abstract Exp.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7.2</td>
<td>2. Paintings must be related to each other in either content or technique.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1, 5.8.2</td>
<td>3. Compositions must take up space of paper and meet all edges of the paper or canvas.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8.1</td>
<td>4. Must show use of principles and elements of design (contrast, emphasis, etc.)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1, 5.1.3, 5.3.2, 5.3.3</td>
<td>5. Students must accompany images with an artist’s statement.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Paul Jackson Pollock was born January 28, 1912, in Cody, Wyoming. He grew up in Arizona and California and in 1928 began to study painting at the Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles. In the fall of 1930, Pollock moved to New York and studied under Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. Benton encouraged him throughout the succeeding decade. By the early 1930s, Pollock knew and admired the murals of José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. Although he traveled widely throughout the United States during the 1930s, much of Pollock's time was spent in New York, where he settled permanently in 1934 and worked on the WPA Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1942. In 1936, he worked in David Alfaro Siqueiros's experimental workshop in New York.

Pollock's first solo show was held at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, New York, in 1943. Guggenheim gave him a contract that lasted through 1947, permitting him to devote all his time to painting. Prior to 1947, Pollock's work reflected the influence of Pablo Picasso and Surrealism [more]. During the early 1940s, he contributed paintings to several exhibitions of Surrealist and abstract art, including Natural, Insane, Surrealist Art at Art of This Century in 1943, and Abstract and Surrealist Art in America, organized by Sidney Janis at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery, New York, in 1944.

From the fall of 1945, when artist Lee Krasner and Pollock were married, they lived in the Springs, East Hampton, New York. In 1952, Pollock's first solo show in Paris opened at the Studio Paul Facchetti and his first retrospective was organized by Clement Greenberg at Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont. He was included in many group exhibitions, including the Annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from 1946 and the Venice Biennale in 1950. Although his work was widely known and exhibited internationally, the artist never traveled outside the United States. He was killed in an automobile accident on August 11, 1956, in the Springs.
Willem de Kooning was born April 24, 1904, in Rotterdam. From 1916 to 1925, he studied at night at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen, Rotterdam, while apprenticed to a commercial-art and decorating firm and later working for an art director. In 1924, he visited museums in Belgium and studied further in Brussels and Antwerp. De Kooning came to the United States in 1926 and settled briefly in Hoboken, New Jersey. He worked as a house painter before moving to New York in 1927, where he met Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky, and John Graham. He took various commercial-art and odd jobs until 1935–36, when he was employed in the mural and easel divisions of the WPA Federal Art Project. Thereafter he painted full-time. In the late 1930s, his abstract as well as figurative work was primarily influenced by the Cubism and Surrealism of Pablo Picasso and also by Gorky, with whom he shared a studio.

In 1938, de Kooning started his first series of Women, which would become a major recurrent theme. During the 1940s, he participated in group shows with other artists who would form the New York School and become known as Abstract Expressionists. De Kooning's first solo show, which took place at the Egan Gallery, New York, in 1948, established his reputation as a major artist; it included a number of the allover black-and-white abstractions he had initiated in 1946. The Women of the early 1950s were followed by abstract urban landscapes, Parkways, rural landscapes, and, in the 1960s, a new group of Women.

Robert Motherwell was born January 4, 1915, in Aberdeen, Washington. He was awarded a fellowship to the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles at age 11, and in 1932 studied painting briefly at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Motherwell received a B.A. from Stanford University in 1937 and enrolled for graduate work later that year in the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He traveled to Europe in 1938 for a year of study abroad. His first solo show was presented at the Raymond Duncan Gallery in Paris in 1939.

In September of 1940, Motherwell settled in New York, where he entered Columbia University to study art history with Meyer Schapiro, who encouraged him to become a painter. In 1941, Motherwell traveled to Mexico with Roberto Matta for six months. After returning to New York, his circle came to include William Baziotes, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Jackson Pollock. In 1942, Motherwell was included in the exhibition First Papers of Surrealism at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion, New York. In 1944, Motherwell became editor of the Documents of Modern Art series of books, and he contributed frequently to the literature on Modern art from that time.

A solo exhibition of Motherwell’s work was held at Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century gallery, New York, in 1944. In 1946, he began to associate with Herbert Ferber, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko, and spent his first summer in East Hampton, Long Island. This year, Motherwell was given solo exhibitions at the Arts Club of Chicago and the San Francisco Museum of Art, and he participated in Fourteen Americans at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The artist subsequently taught and lectured throughout the United States, and continued to exhibit extensively in the United States and abroad. A Motherwell exhibition took place at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, the Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1976–77. He was given important solo exhibitions at the Royal Academy, London, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., in 1978. A retrospective of his works organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, traveled in the United States from 1983 to 1985. From 1971, the artist lived and worked in Greenwich, Connecticut. He died July 16, 1991, in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.
Arshile Gorky was born Vosdanik Adoian in the village of Khorkom, province of Van, Armenia, on April 15, 1904. The Adoians became refugees from the Turkish invasion; Gorky himself left Van in 1915 and arrived in the United States about March 1, 1920. He stayed with relatives in Watertown, Massachusetts, and with his father, who had settled in Providence, Rhode Island. By 1922 he lived in Watertown and taught at the New School of Design in Boston. In 1925 he moved to New York and changed his name to Arshile Gorky. He entered the Grand Central School of Art in New York as a student but soon became an instructor of drawing; from 1926 to 1931 he was a member of the faculty. Throughout the 1920s Gorky’s painting was influenced by Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, and, above all, Pablo Picasso.

In 1930 Gorky’s work was included in a group show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. During the thirties he associated closely with Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, and John Graham; he shared a studio with de Kooning late in the decade. Gorky’s first solo show took place at the Mellon Galleries in Philadelphia in 1931. From 1935 to 1937 he worked under the WPA Federal Art Project on murals for Newark Airport. His involvement with the WPA continued into 1941. Gorky’s first solo show in New York was held at the Boyer Galleries in 1938. The San Francisco Museum of Art exhibited his work in 1941.

In the 1940s he was profoundly affected by the work of European Surrealists, particularly Joan Miró, André Masson, and Matta. By 1944 he met André Breton and became a friend of other Surrealist emigrés in this country. Gorky’s first exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York took place in 1945. From 1942 to 1948 he worked for part of each year in the countryside of Connecticut or Virginia. A succession of personal tragedies, including a fire in his studio that destroyed much of his work, a serious operation, and an automobile accident, preceded Gorky’s death by suicide on July 21, 1948, in Sherman, Connecticut.
Hans Hofmann was born March 21, 1880, in Weissenburg, Bavaria. He was raised in Munich, where in 1898 he began to study at various art schools. The patronage of Philip Freudenberg, a Berlin art collector, enabled Hofmann to live in Paris from 1904 to 1914. In Paris, he attended the Académie Colarossi and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière; he met Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, and other Cubists and was a friend of Robert Delaunay, who stimulated his interest in color. In 1909, Hofmann exhibited with the Neue Sezession in Berlin, and in 1910 was given his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Paul Cassirer there. During this period, he painted in a Cubist style.

At the outbreak of World War I, Hofmann was in Munich; disqualified from military service due to a lung condition, he remained there and in 1915 opened an art school, which became highly successful. The artist taught at the University of California at Berkeley during the summer of 1930. He returned to teach in California in 1931, and his first exhibition in the United States took place that summer at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco. In 1932, he closed his Munich school and decided to settle in the United States. His first school in New York opened in 1933 and was succeeded in 1934 by the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts; in 1935, he established a summer school in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

After an extended period devoted to drawing, Hofmann returned to painting in 1935, combining Cubist structure, vivid color, and emphatic gesture. He became a United States citizen in 1941. The artist’s completely abstract works date from the 1940s. His first solo exhibition in New York took place at Peggy Guggenheim’s gallery, Art of This Century, in 1944. Hofmann was an important influence upon younger artists. In 1958, he closed his schools to devote himself full-time to painting. Hofmann died February 17, 1966, in New York.
Yves Tanguy-

(http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_bio_1027.html)

Raymond Georges Yves Tanguy was born on January 5, 1900, in Paris. While attending lycée during the 1910s, he met Pierre Matisse, his future dealer and lifelong friend. In 1918 he joined the Merchant Marine and traveled to Africa, South America, and England. During military service at Lunéville in 1920, Tanguy became a friend of the poet Jacques Prévert. He returned to Paris in 1922 after volunteer service in Tunis and began sketching café scenes that were praised by Maurice de Vlaminck. After Tanguy saw Giorgio de Chirico's work in 1923, he decided to become a painter. In 1924, he, Prévert, and Marcel Duhamel moved into a house that was to become a gathering place for the Surrealists. Tanguy became interested in Surrealism [more] in 1924, when he saw the periodical La Révolution surréaliste. André Breton welcomed him into the Surrealist group the following year.

Despite his lack of formal training, Tanguy's art developed quickly and his mature style emerged by 1927. His first solo show was held in 1927 at the Galerie Surréaliste in Paris. In 1928 he participated with Jean Arp, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, and others in the Surrealist exhibition at the Galerie au Sacre du Printemps, Paris. Tanguy incorporated into his work the images of geological formations he had observed during a trip to Africa in 1930. He exhibited extensively during the 1930s in solo and Surrealist group shows in New York, Brussels, Paris, and London.

In 1939 Tanguy met the painter Kay Sage in Paris and later that year traveled with her to the American Southwest. They married in 1940 and settled in Woodbury, Connecticut. In 1942 Tanguy participated in the Artists in Exile show at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, where he exhibited frequently until 1950. In 1947 his work was included in the exhibition Le Surréalisme en 1947, organized by Breton and Marcel Duchamp at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. He became a United States citizen in 1948. In 1953 he visited Rome, Milan, and Paris on the occasion of his solo shows in those cities. The following year he shared an exhibition with Kay Sage at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford and appeared in Hans Richter's film 8 x 8. A retrospective of Tanguy's work was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York eight months after his death on January 15, 1955, in Woodbury.
Mark Rothko was born Marcus Rothkowitz on September 25, 1903, in Dvinsk, Russia. In 1913, he left Russia and settled with the rest of his family in Portland, Oregon. Rothko attended Yale University, New Haven, on a scholarship from 1921 to 1923. That year, he left Yale without receiving a degree and moved to New York. In 1925, he studied under Max Weber at the Art Students League. He participated in his first group exhibition at the Opportunity Galleries, New York, in 1928. During the early 1930s, Rothko became a close friend of Milton Avery and Adolph Gottlieb. His first solo show took place at the Portland Art Museum in 1933.

Rothko's first solo exhibition in New York was held at the Contemporary Arts Gallery in 1933. In 1935, he was a founding member of the Ten, a group of artists sympathetic to abstraction and Expressionism [more]. He executed easel paintings for the WPA Federal Art Project from 1936 to 1937. By 1936, Rothko knew Barnett Newman. In the early 1940s, he worked closely with Gottlieb, developing a painting style with mythological content, simple flat shapes, and imagery inspired by primitive art. By mid-decade, his work incorporated Surrealist techniques and images. Peggy Guggenheim gave Rothko a solo show at Art of This Century in New York in 1945.

In 1947 and 1949, Rothko taught at the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco, where Clyfford Still was a fellow instructor. With William Baziotes, David Hare, and Robert Motherwell, Rothko founded the short-lived Subjects of the Artist school in New York in 1948. The late 1940s and early 1950s saw the emergence of Rothko's mature style, in which frontal, luminous rectangles seem to hover on the canvas surface. In 1958, the artist began his first commission, monumental paintings for the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gave Rothko an important solo exhibition in 1961. He completed murals for Harvard University in 1962 and in 1964 accepted a mural commission for an interdenominational chapel in Houston. Rothko took his own life February 25, 1970, in his New York studio. A year later, the Rothko Chapel in Houston was dedicated.
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<td>Yves Tanguy</td>
<td>oil on canvas 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in.</td>
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<td>Water of the Flowery Mill</td>
<td>Arshile Gorky</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
<td>Christy Dillard</td>
<td>dry pastel on paper 18 x 24 in.</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
<td>Jon Moore</td>
<td>dry pastel on paper 18 x 24 in.</td>
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<td>Number 1, 1950 (Lavendar Mist)</td>
<td>Jackson Pollock</td>
<td>oil, enamel and aluminum on canvas 87 x 118 in.</td>
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<td>Excavation</td>
<td>Willem de Kooning</td>
<td>oil on canvas 206.2 x 257.3 cm</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
<td>Christy Dillard</td>
<td>acrylic on canvas 16 x 20 in.</td>
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<td>The Ocean</td>
<td>Hans Hofmann</td>
<td>oil on canvas 152 x 182.5 cm</td>
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<td>Woman I</td>
<td>Willem De Kooning</td>
<td>oil on canvas 192.7 x 147.3 cm</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
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<td>Infinity Field</td>
<td>Cretan Riztika</td>
<td>acrylic on cotton wool 167.6 x 152.4 cm</td>
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<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Mark Rothko</td>
<td>oil on canvas 143 x 138 cm</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
<td>Christy Dillard</td>
<td>Adobe Photoshop graphic 8 x 8 in.</td>
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<td>Untitled (production example)</td>
<td>Christy Dillard</td>
<td>Adobe Photoshop graphic 8 x 8 in.</td>
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<td>Rescue In Red</td>
<td>Christy Dillard</td>
<td>oil on canvas 31 ¾ x 42 ¼ in.</td>
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References


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