

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: RACE AND GENDER IN THE RECEPTION OF PAINTINGS BY HELEN FRANKENTHALER, NORMAN LEWIS, ALMA THOMAS, AND MARK TOBEY

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Through an examination of the art world reception of four nonfigurative American artists, this dissertation determines that concerns about race and gender are ever-present, and affected how onlookers interpreted the artists' creations. By focusing on the critical, academic, and market reception of Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011), Norman Lewis (1909-1979), Alma Thomas (1891-1978), and Mark Tobey (1890-1976), I conclude that the malleable components of race and gender, elements connected by difference and relegation, fluctuate in the reception. As such, at times race and gender manifest overtly, while at other times, they play indirect roles in the reception of the artists. Further, my work illuminates the fact that later critics and scholars recycled the terminology and ideas about race and gender included in the early reception.

I form a nuanced picture of the lives, careers, and output of these artists, underscoring the subjective and manipulated aspects of reception. This layer of detail distinguishes this dissertation from other studies of these artists. I adopt key methodologies, which enable this close consideration of the fine distinctions in their reception. Feminist analysis, reception theory, and auction market analysis uniquely intersect to create a complicated yet clarified picture of reception as a confluence of manipulation factors.

I unravel the concept of “art world,” to show that this entity is composed of a variety of subgroups, with diverse opinions. The recognition of these variations enables this nuanced understanding of reception. This aspect of my work, as well, is distinctive, and even has broad applications within the field of art history.

Exploring in detail how critics and scholars interpreted and constructed the artists and their output, I present the mechanics of race and gender in the reception of four diverse artists. I underscore the structures of power inherent in the categories of identity, and how hierarchies are used to integrate and relegate artists to the margins. This dissertation shows that even within the scope of nonfigurative art creations, interpreters infuse race and gender into their readings of the objects. My work demonstrates the extent to which identity was a core value for twentieth-century critics and scholars.

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NORMAN LEWIS, ALMA THOMAS, AND MARK TOBEY

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Bettina Bjorksten-Orsech, whose life was a model of how to overcome adversity, face life's mountains, and triumph against all odds. My grandmother left Nazi Germany for the United States and settled in Madison, Wisconsin. She accepted a teaching job at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and became one of the first female professors in its School of Music in the 1950s. Her lifelong love for the performing and visual arts was so infectious that it led me to study the history of art. Her quiet strength of character and advocacy of other women made her a feminist pioneer. To me, she was the lighthouse of Alexandria; a wonder of the world whose light continues to shine through my life, guiding me at every step.

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I wish to extend my appreciation to the staff at the Archives of American Art in Washington, DC, and the Columbus Museum in Columbus, Georgia, for their assistance.

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Finally, the unwavering support of Behzad Gohari has encouraged me to pursue my dreams, and for that, I am immensely grateful.

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
<u>Race and Gender in the Reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey</u> ...	1
<u>Selection of the Artists</u>	10
<u>Overview of the Chapters</u>	16
<u>Scholarly Influences</u>	27
Chapter 2: The Art World and Reception.....	32
<u>Reception Theory</u>	33
<u>The Art World and Its Subgroups</u>	44
<u>The Reception of Race and Gender in the Art World</u>	49
Chapter 3: Helen Frankenthaler: A Tale of Feminist Opportunism.....	58
<u>Life Overview</u>	58
<u>Clement Greenberg and a Network Gained</u>	62
<u>Mountains and Sea and the Use of Soak-Stain</u>	65
<u>The Period of 1955-1960</u>	76
<u>The Period of 1960-1965</u>	80
<u>Auction Performance of a Powerful Female Artist</u>	83
Chapter 4: Norman Lewis: The Wandering Artist, Held Back.....	87
<u>Life Overview</u>	87
<u>The Early Years: Developing a Unique Style</u>	89
<u>Picketing the Metropolitan</u>	96
<u>Wandering from Job to Job</u>	104
<u>Slow and Scant Auction Market Performance</u>	106
Chapter 5: Alma Thomas: Southern Courtesy Cocooning an Artist's Life.....	108
<u>Life Overview</u>	108
<u>Washington, DC</u>	110
<u>Teaching and Learning Simultaneously</u>	113
<u>Retiring to Begin Another Career</u>	115
<u>Auction Performance of a 'Polite and Courteous' Woman</u>	124

Chapter 6: Mark Tobey: The ‘Universal,’ ‘Mysterious’ Legend.....	127
<u>Life Overview</u>	127
<u>Blackboard Drawings in the Midwest</u>	130
<u>Exploring Art and Religion</u>	131
<u>Gaining Acceptance and Access</u>	140
<u>Auction Performance Worthy of a Sage</u>	147
Chapter 7: Race in the Reception of Nonfigurative Painting	149
<u>The Social Construction of Race</u>	149
<u>Race-Related Events and the Artists’ Early Lives</u>	157
<u>Race and the Mid-Century Art World</u>	159
<u>Race and Norman Lewis</u>	166
<u>Race, Norman Lewis, and Gallery Representation</u>	184
<u>Race and Alma Thomas</u>	187
<u>Race and Mark Tobey</u>	200
<u>Race and Helen Frankenthaler</u>	205
Chapter 8: Gender in the Reception of Nonfigurative Painting.....	209
<u>Social Construction of Gender</u>	209
<u>Feminism in the United States</u>	210
<u>Abstract Expressionism and Gender</u>	214
<u>Gender and Helen Frankenthaler</u>	218
<u>Gender and Alma Thomas</u>	240
<u>Social Construction of Masculinity</u>	243
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	251
Appendix 1: Auction Market Values	257
Appendix 2: Select Gallery and Museum Exhibitions.....	328
<u>Helen Frankenthaler</u>	328
<u>Norman Lewis</u>	331
<u>Alma Thomas</u>	337
<u>Mark Tobey</u>	342
Figures.....	345
Bibliography	379

List of Tables

Table 1. Auction Values of Helen Frankenthaler's Paintings.

Table 2. Auction Values of Norman Lewis's Paintings.

Table 3. Auction Values of Alma Thomas's Paintings.

Table 4. Auction Values of Mark Tobey's Paintings.

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Helen Frankenthaler, *Abstract Landscape*, 1951, Oil on sized, primed canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 2. Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea*, 1952, Oil on canvas. Collection Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc., on extended loan to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- Figure 3. Helen Frankenthaler, *Garden Maze*, 1952, Oil on sized, primed canvas. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen.
- Figure 4. Helen Frankenthaler, *10/29/52*, 1952, Oil on canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 5. Helen Frankenthaler, *Shatter*, 1953, Oil on canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 6. Helen Frankenthaler, *Nude*, 1958, Oil on canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 7. Helen Frankenthaler, *Winter Figure with Black Overhead*, 1959, Oil on sized, primed canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 8. Helen Frankenthaler, *Yellow Caterpillar*, 1961, Oil on canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 9. Helen Frankenthaler, *Small's Paradise*, 1964, Acrylic on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of George L. Erion.
- Figure 10. Helen Frankenthaler, *Nadir Rising*, 1974, Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.
- Figure 11. Norman Lewis, *Johnny the Wanderer*, 1933, Oil on canvas. Collection of Tarin M. Fuller.
- Figure 12. Norman Lewis, *Yellow Hat*, 1936, Oil on burlap. Collection of Mrs. Ouida Lewis.
- Figure 13. Norman Lewis, *Blending*, 1951, Oil on canvas. Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum, Utica, New York.
- Figure 14. Norman Lewis, *Migrating Birds*, 1953, Oil on linen. Private Collection.
- Figure 15. Norman Lewis, *Processional*, 1965, Oil on canvas. Norman Lewis Collection.

Figure 16. Alma Thomas, *Study of a Young Girl*, ca. 1955, Oil on fiberboard. Barnett-Aden Collection.

Figure 17. Alma Thomas, *Blue and Brown Still Life*, 1958, Oil on fiberboard. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Vincent Melzac, Arlington, Virginia, 1976.

Figure 18. Alma Thomas, *Spring Fantasy*, 1963, Watercolor on paper. In the Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Ida Jervis in Memory of Alma Thomas.

Figure 19. Alma Thomas, *Untitled*, 1966, Watercolor on paper. The Estate of Franz Bader.

Figure 20. Alma Thomas, *Air View of Spring Nursery*, 1966, Acrylic on canvas. The Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia. Gift of the Columbus-Phenix City National Association of Negro Business Women and of the artist.

Figure 21. Alma Thomas, *Red Violet Nursery Viewed from Above*, ca. 1970, Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.

Figure 22. Alma Thomas, *Springtime in Washington*, 1971, Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.

Figure 23. Alma Thomas, *Cherry Blossom Symphony*, 1972, Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Charles Arnold Hart.

Figure 24. Alma Thomas, *Babbling Brook and Whistling Poplar Trees Symphony*, 1976, Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Sherman K. and Essie Green-Edmiston.

Figure 25. Mark Tobey, *Broadway*, 1935-1936, Tempera on fiberboard. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 26. Mark Tobey, *Broadway Boogie*, 1942, Tempera on composition board. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Weinstein, Seattle, Washington.

Figure 27. Mark Tobey, *Drift of Summer*, 1942, Tempera. Collection of Wright Ludington, Santa Barbara, California.

Figure 28. Mark Tobey, *Remembrance in Light*, 1942, Tempera on board. Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho.

Figure 29. Mark Tobey, *Written Over the Plains*, 1950, Mixed media on paper mounted on masonite. San Francisco Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Smith.

Figure 30. Mark Tobey, *Meditative Series VIII*, 1954, Tempera on paper. Private Collection.

Figure 31. Mark Tobey, *Space Ritual # 4*, 1957, Brush and Sumi ink on paper. Smith College Museum of Art.

Figure 32. Mark Tobey, *Homage to Rameau*, 1960, Tempera on black paper. Willard Gallery, New York.

Figure 33. Artists' Sessions at Studio 35, 1950, Photograph by Max Yavno.

Figure 34. "Irascible Group of Advanced Artists," 1951, *Life* magazine.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Race and Gender in the Reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey

Art history begins by looking. This very act, however, is socially constructed; how we look and interpret an object is dependent upon our social position and conditioning, and the time and place in which we live and experience that object.¹ As a result, a work of art commences its journey into history before it is made, with many of its formal elements determined by societal construction and knowledge about the artist.² From the moment the artist is born to the moment of creation and the work's eventual entry into the stream of commerce, art history is a companion to the subject, its maker, and all participants in its reception – society, mentors, galleries, museums, and even the art historians themselves. The word “look,” therefore, is a verb involving the active participation of all involved, each bringing a wealth of personal and cultural context to his or her act of looking. This act forever transforms

¹ See Michael Baxandall, *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 1988). Baxandall argues that the viewer's “general experience” determines much of his or her understanding of a work of art. *Ibid.*, 35. While Baxandall focuses on fifteenth-century Italy, his observations have broad applications across art historical periods. He asserts that the ways in which we observe an object “will depend on many things—particularly on the context of the configuration . . . but not least on the interpreting skills one happens to possess, the categories, the model patterns and the habits of inference and analogy: in short, what we may call one's *cognitive style*.” *Ibid.*, 29-30.

See also John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1990). Berger discusses the importance of context in viewing and interpreting works of art. As such, an individual's experience of a work of art is dependent on both the actual display of the object as well as the experiences leading up and simultaneous to the interaction with the object. Berger begins his book by noting, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it.” *Ibid.*, 7.

² Examining the relative meaning of a work of art, Berger explains, “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe . . . We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.” *Ibid.*, 8-9.

the work of art into a medium through which a message is communicated to the observer.

This dissertation examines the art world's reception of four artists: Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011),³ Norman Lewis (1909-1979),⁴ Alma Thomas (1891-1978),⁵ and Mark Tobey (1890-1976).⁶ Using case studies, I explore the paradigms of race and gender, components connected by difference and relegation, to interrogate the reception of these artists.⁷ My definition of race and gender, explored briefly

³ Key texts on Frankenthaler include: Dore Ashton, "Helen Frankenthaler," *Studio International* 170, no. 868 (August 1965): 52-55; E.C. Goossen, *Helen Frankenthaler*, exh. cat. (New York: Rapoport Printing Corporation, 1969); Barbara Rose, "Painting within the Tradition: The Career of Helen Frankenthaler," *Artforum* 7, no. 8 (April 1969): 28-33; Barbara Rose, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1970); Carl Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950s*, exh. cat. (Waltham, Massachusetts: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1981); E.A. Carmean, Jr., *Helen Frankenthaler: A Paintings Retrospective*, exh. cat. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989); and John Elderfield, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1989).

⁴ Key texts on Lewis include: *Norman Lewis: From the Harlem Renaissance to Abstraction*, exh. cat. (New York: Kenkeleba House, Inc., 1989); Ann Eden Gibson, "Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock," *Artforum* 30, no. 7 (March 1992): 66-73; David Craven, Ann Eden Gibson, Lowery S. Sims, and Jorge D. Veneciano, *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998).

⁵ Key texts on Thomas include: Robert Doty, *Alma W. Thomas: Recent Paintings, 1975-1976*, exh. cat. (New York: Martha Jackson, 1976); Merry A. Foresta, *A Life in Art: Alma Thomas, 1891-1978*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981); and *Alma W. Thomas, A Retrospective of the Paintings*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998).

⁶ Key texts on Tobey include: *Fourteen Americans*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946); Wieland Schmied, *Tobey* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959); William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962); *Mark Tobey: Paintings from the Collection of Joyce and Arthur Dahl*, exh. cat. (Paolo Alto, CA, 1967); John Russell, *Mark Tobey*, exh. cat. (London: Hanover Gallery, 1968); Joshua C. Taylor, *Tribute to Mark Tobey*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974); and Eliza E. Rathbone, and *Mark Tobey: City Paintings*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1984).

⁷ Artists and some academics have attempted to break new ground on issues of race and gender. From Linda Nochlin to Mary Garrard and Norma Broude, from Martin Berger and Kymberly Pinder to Adrian Piper, art historians and artists have established new, original, and important theories of race and gender, and thus, innovative ways to approach and understand the topics. See Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Linda Nochlin, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988); Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, "Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth-Century," in *The Power of Feminist Art, The American Movement of the 1970's, History and Impact*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 10-29; and Kymberly N. Pinder, ed., *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and Martin A.

throughout this chapter and in more detail in chapters seven and eight, is subtle, nuanced, and historically shaped.⁸ Race and gender permeate American society, affecting not only how we view one another, but also how we understand and interpret ourselves.⁹ As such, I study the relative importance of race and gender in the artists' critical, academic, museum, gallery, and market reception in the mid- to latter-half of the twentieth century; I examine their lives through this lens in order to determine how these constructions affected the reception of their careers and nonfigurative creations.¹⁰ Although issues of class and age inevitably become evident, my focus remains race and gender. Through this exploration, I determine that while concerns about race and gender are ever-present, these components

Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁸ Michael Omi and Howard Winant detail the complex history of race in the second half of the twentieth century in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. They explain, "In the 1960s, race occupied the center stage of American politics in a manner unprecedented since the Civil War era a century earlier. . . The 1970s, by contrast, were years of racial quiescence when the racial minority movements of the previous period seemed to wane. . . Issues of race have once again been dramatically revived in the 1980s, this time in the form of a 'backlash' to the political gains of racial minority movements of the past." Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2. The authors underscore the changing nature of race in American society. Omi and Winant explain that racial discord permeated the period. In the 1970s, for example, although the "intense conflict" of the previous period faded, "racial oppression had hardly vanished, but conflicts over race receded as past reforms were institutionalized." Ibid. Race thus remained a significant issue through the second half of the twentieth century, although one can observe its fluctuations in American consciousness and politics. Underscoring this point in their critique of other theories of race, the authors write, "In general, theoretical work on race has not successfully grasped the shifting nature of racial dynamics in the postwar U.S., a failure which sparked important challenges as postwar racial events appeared to conflict with the predictions of theory." Ibid. Similarly, the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, reveals ebbs and flows of concern for race (and gender), wherein this ubiquitous issue shifts between explicit, veiled, and nuanced manifestations.

⁹ See Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*.

¹⁰ I describe the abstracted styles of the artists studied herein as "nonfigurative," as opposed to "abstract," to specify the kind of depictions they pursued. While nature and natural forms often inspired these artists, they excluded figurative forms from these works, and portrayed their ideas without direct reference to the physical world. Therefore, they did not make the decision to abandon all reference to nature in favor of total abstraction.

fluctuate in the reception between overt and indirect manifestations. It becomes clear that race and gender are malleable and play varying roles in the reception of the artists. This study reveals that regardless of how the artists defined themselves, conceptions of race and gender affected interpretations of their nonfigurative creations.

In my approach, I employ reception theory as a means of expanding the art historical discourse on mid-century American artists, exploring if, when, and how individuals, institutions, and the culture infuse race and gender into assessments of nonfigurative works of art.¹¹ I also look carefully at the auction sales volume and the market value of each artist's works.¹² This quantitative trend analysis provides additional support to my qualitative study and interpretation. Although auction sales simultaneously prove to be another manipulated component of reception,¹³ market data both reinforces other modes of reception, and affects how we think about these artists. It underscores the constructed nature of reception. These methodologies

¹¹ Key texts on reception theory include: Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen), 1984; Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Hans Robert Jauss, "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding," in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York: Routledge, 2001); Philip Goldstein and James L. Machor, eds., *New Directions in American Reception Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Important texts and articles on the art market include: *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, ed. Iain Robertson (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Kate Taylor, "Auction Houses vs. Dealers," *The New York Sun*, April 16, 2007, accessed September 26, 2007, <http://www.nysun.com/article/52493>; Ai Weiwei, Amy Cappellazzo, et al., "Art and Its Markets: A Roundtable Discussion," *Artforum International* (April 2008): 292-303.

¹³ From families withholding works of art from the auction block, to dealers buying art objects in mass from auction houses, to buyers manipulating prices for a variety of reasons, the art market provides a useful numerical history of reception, albeit one that is malleable. See chapter two and the concluding remarks in chapters three, four, five, and six, for a more detailed discussion of the auction market.

intersect to render a picture of race, gender, and the marketplace as subjective, for different ends. All together, these modes of reception form a constellation of manipulation factors.

Art world reception is composed of the interpretations of a variety of individuals, including artists, critics, gallery owners, museum directors and curators, auction house officials, and academics. These subgroups constitute a community within the larger whole, and possess vastly diverse social and political opinions. Each has its own needs, views, and socio-economic interests, which serve to shape its subjective outlook. One way to gain a nuanced understanding of reception, and thereby ascertain how these segments of the art world approached artists and objects, is to study the critical and financial success of artists of different races and genders over the mid to latter half of the twentieth century.¹⁴

Race has been a dominant issue throughout the history of the United States. From slavery to the Civil War,¹⁵ from Plymouth Rock to the massive immigration

¹⁴ For an analysis of the social construction of race, see: Ruth Frankenberg, *The Social Construction of White Women, Whiteness, Race Matters* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1996); *Theories of Race and Racism*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000); Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*; Paula S. Rothenberg, *White Privilege* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2011).

¹⁵ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., provide a comprehensive history of African Americans in their important text, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*. John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). Following Carter G. Woodson's 1922 groundbreaking study of African American history, general texts which include broad histories of African Americans include: Mary Frances Berry and John W. Blassingame, *Long Memory: The Black Experience in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans: From the Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom to the Eve of the Compromise of 1850* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Eli Ginzberg and Alfred S. Eichner, *Troublesome Presence: Democracy and Black Americans* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993), and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, *The African-American Century: How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). Significant texts on African American women in United States

boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, race has been an ever-present issue in the discourse, outlook, and ideology of this nation.¹⁶ After World War II, and along with the advent of the baby boom, race crept to the forefront of the American psyche, with the quest for equality peaking in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement and major acts of Congress on equality, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In the post-civil rights era, race has maintained its importance in the fabric of American life. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s, the issue of equal opportunity, the discussions of multiculturalism, and the integration of racial and ethnic groups moved from the halls of Congress and the Supreme Court to Main Street.¹⁷ Beginning in the 1980s, the United States began to experience another immigration boom from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, transforming diversity

history include: Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Particularly significant collections of African American historical materials are located at Fisk University and Hampton University, as well as the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale University, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

¹⁶ Omi and Winant explain that while race has remained at the forefront of the American social and political outlook historically, our understanding of its definitions has shifted. They note, “The variation both reflects and in turn shapes racial understanding and dynamics. It establishes often contradictory parameters of racial identity into which both individuals and groups must fit.” Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 3. By way of example, these scholars describe the changing definitions of race within the United States census: “Groups such as Japanese Americans have moved from categories such as ‘non-white,’ ‘Oriental,’ or simply ‘Other’ to recent inclusion as a specific ‘ethnic’ group under the broader category of ‘Asian and Pacific Islanders.’” This example is but one illustration of the fluid and malleable understanding of racial identity in the United States. Ibid.

¹⁷ See Michael Eric Dyson, *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

from a theoretical construct to an active part of the everyday lives of Americans.¹⁸

This influx also brought difference to the surface of American life. While immigrants to the United States could earn official citizenship, culturally they were distinguished from the rest of the population, with society underscoring physiological differences and correlating such elements to ability, intention, and mental state.¹⁹

Gender, too, has been integral to access.²⁰ Also socially constructed, the characteristics and attributes ascribed to males and females, thereby comprising gender, have altered throughout American history to accommodate the shifting needs of the culture-at-large.²¹ Gender is neither fixed, nor “natural” and inherent. Rather, gender is determined by the repetition of culturally constructed acts, which change throughout history depending on what a particular society in a certain time deems

¹⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 194-197.

¹⁹ See Robert Miles, “Apropos The Idea of ‘Race’ . . . Again,” in *Theories of Race and Racism*, 130. See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005) for a revisionist account of United States history, in which Zinn examines United States history through the lens of marginalized members of American society.

²⁰ Writing on mid-century abstract artists, Lisa Saltzman argues, “In their attribution of masculinity to canvases painted by male artists and femininity to those painted by female artists, critics asserted the fundamental primacy of sexual difference, and did so precisely at the moment when gender boundaries were seen as being in danger of disappearing, both artistically and socially.” Lisa Saltzman, “Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler’s Painting,” in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, eds., Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 379.

Additionally, Saltzman asserts that a re-examination of abstraction is rare. She argues, “Despite the prevalence of a gendered metaphoric in the reception of abstraction, very little has been done to analyze its implications, either for New York School painting or for the interpretation of abstraction more generally. Even in the work of the first generation of feminist art historians who explicitly took on questions of gender, the interpretation of abstraction was never the primary object of inquiry.” *Ibid.*, 374.

²¹ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

acceptable.²² Historically, gender studies have focused primarily on women. However, scholars have more recently integrated masculinity studies into the larger rubric of gender studies, thereby acknowledging that gender, in fact, refers not only to women, but to men as well.²³ As such, gendered constructions of males are rooted in social expectations and stereotypes, with society judging men by how they conform to or defy such ideas. I discuss the importance of masculinity studies within a reading of the reception of these artists in general, and Norman Lewis and Mark Tobey specifically, in more detail in chapter eight.

Access for women reveals a long history.²⁴ Feminist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused primarily on suffrage and on asserting women's voices in the political system.²⁵ From the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to suffragist proponents Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Julia Ward Howe, women achieved suffrage only in 1920. The Nineteenth Amendment did not, in reality, bring voting rights to all. African

²² See these important texts on the social construction of gender: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1989); Whitney Davis, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996, 2003), 330-344, and Judith Lorber, "Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology," *Gender and Society*, 7 (1993): 568-581.

²³ See Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, eds., *Constructing Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, eds., *Theorizing Masculinities* (London: Sage, 1994).

²⁴ This history is marked by varied approaches of feminism. Chadwick explains, "Within feminism, there are now multiple approaches . . . Some feminists remain committed to identifying the ways that femininity is evidenced in representation, others to producing a critical practice that resists positioning women as spectacle, or object of the male gaze. Still others are concentrating on critiquing and/or transforming coercive, hierarchical structures of domination." Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1990), 14.

²⁵ Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, *The F Word: Feminism in Jeopardy* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 1994), 23.

American women and men were still prohibited from voting.²⁶ African American women, in particular, faced multilevel discrimination based on their race and sex.²⁷

Women's advocacy culminated in the women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, with proponents focused on reproductive rights, workplace inequality, and the family.²⁸ Despite gains, women have yet to achieve parity with men in income earned for the same work, are less encouraged than men to run for political office, and regularly battle discrimination that has seeped into the common vernacular disguised as light-hearted and witty speech.²⁹ This hindrance in societal access influences the art world, where women artists are generally relegated to its periphery.

Race and gender thus form a conceptual framework through which to examine the nuances of the art world reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. These components prove to have been significant factors in analyzing and understanding their artistic output. I focus on these artists to reveal how the coded

²⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

²⁷ Political historian Zillah Eisenstein asserts, "Issues of racism and sexism form a major part of the political landscape of the United States. The two issues sometimes require women of color to choose between and against themselves." Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Color of Gender: Reimagining Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 199. See Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30 (1988): 61-85; Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995); Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994); bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Boston: South End, 2000); and Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

²⁸ See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

²⁹ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 49. See Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009) for an account of women's accomplishments in the United States from mid century to the first decade of the twenty-first century.

discourse of race and gender has shaped their reception. Through my exploration of the effect of race and gender on the reception of these artists, I maintain that they were significant and influential modern artists who achieved recognition and success. My intention, thus, is not to diminish their importance, but rather to explore how race and gender influenced the art world's understanding of them. I am interested, therefore, in the nuances of their reception, which I have incidentally recognized is perpetuated in various forms into the contemporary moment. They serve as case studies in my dissertation to elucidate how the art world interprets artistic production through constructs of race and gender.³⁰

Selection of the Artists

Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey provide a useful comparative model because they were artists of different races and sexes who worked in nonfigurative idioms during overlapping periods. These artists are generationally divided, thereby spanning a broad historical period. Mark Tobey came of age as an artist during a time that was fundamentally different from that of Frankenthaler, Lewis, and Thomas. The comparison of their careers and output, nevertheless, is apt; it allows for the appreciation of the intersections and disjunctures in the reception of

³⁰ There are several trailblazers who challenged a traditional art historical model. Linda Nochlin's 1971 groundbreaking article, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," incisively probes the formation of art history as a form of critical inquiry, and specifically, how and by whom, that canon is constructed, and who is thus omitted. In 1982, Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker published *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon, 1981). With it, they provided a theoretical model that questions privilege within the discipline and why art historians focus primarily of male artists to the exclusion of female artists. Scholars Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard edited *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (Nashville, TN: Westview Press, 1982), followed by *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (Nashville, TN: Westview Press, 1992), and *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism* of 2005, key works that are integral anthologies to feminist art historical scholarship.

four distinct artists, whereby changing approaches to understanding art and artists may be observed. I chose painters working in nonfigurative form as opposed to representational artists because there is no inherent manner in which to read race and gender in the pigment and fracture of their work, whereas representational artists may overtly explore aspects of identity.

Frankenthaler and Thomas deflected attention from their race and gender in interviews, whereas Lewis confronted the subject of race, while Tobey focused on his religious and artistic journey. All four artists achieved significant art world attention. Yet critics and scholars often overtly and invariably read Frankenthaler's, Lewis's, and Thomas's works through their respective biography, while reserving a position of universalism for Tobey, which I argue is a code for whiteness, and describing him in more subtle, veiled terms.

Mark Tobey created his nonfigurative works to convey his interest in the formal properties of painting. Additionally, his works allowed for the spiritual exercise of an unconventional religion and his propensity toward Asian artistic and cultural influence, which directly affected how he approached painting. Interestingly, his nonfigurative painting style, primarily void of direct, detailed, or clear representational forms, veiled his sexual orientation and provided the space in which he could express himself without trepidation about the reprimanding voice of the critic. Reminiscing on his mid-1940s shifting style from figuration to nonfigurative form, Tobey admitted in 1962, "if I really were to paint what I want . . . I'd paint men."³¹

³¹ Christopher Reed, "Imagining Identity: Sexuality, Regionalism, and Legacy in Mid-Twentieth Century American Art," "Hide/Seek" Scholarly Symposium, National Portrait Gallery, January 29,

Helen Frankenthaler, Norman Lewis, and Alma Thomas's mature styles are marked by a primary concern with the formal properties of painting, often inspired by nature and natural forms. These artists remarked on gender and race bias, but in different ways. Frankenthaler and Thomas avoided direct reference to the impact of gender- and race-based bias on their careers, with Thomas even shifting the conversation to one of work ethic, insisting that hard work is the primary determinant of success. After the mid to late 1940s, Lewis reserved his art for an exploration of formal properties, utilizing interviews and activist platforms to express his views on racism and racial discord.

Thus all four artists were concerned with the mechanics of painting and as such, explored nonfigurative themes in which they exploited palette, line, form, and shape. Additionally, however, they may have sought nonfigurative form, in part, for its apparent ability to mask aspects of the self from a critical world. Their reception, however, reflects the consistent concern of critics, scholars, museum curators, boards, and directors, gallery owners, and the marketplace, for their biography.

The individual comparison of these artists to one another also reveals fascinating parallels and distinctions. First, Alma Thomas and Mark Tobey were both born in the early 1890s, outside of New York, in the Deep South and Midwest,

2011. Much of Tobey's criticism, discussed in detail in chapter six, subtly suggests that Tobey fits the mold of a "dandy." From his interest in poetry and the performing arts, to his unconventional living arrangements, critics and scholars regularly described the artist within the context of his interests and persona as they probed his works. This construction, I argue, was the way critics suggested his homosexuality without overtly broaching the subject of sexuality.

For an examination of sexuality and art, see: Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jonathan D. Katz and David C. Ward, *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2010); and Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

respectively. Both were artistic throughout their childhoods, and encouraged by their families to develop their artistic talents. Additionally, while they started their professional painting careers working in representational forms, they quickly discarded this idiom in favor of nonfigurative form, in which they explored the nuances of line, form, and color. They represent two individuals of the same generation who eventually painted in nonfigurative form, but their personal paths towards their artistic destination suggest social forces at work. Tobey, who remained without significant formal art training throughout his life, received early recognition with a one-person exhibition in 1917 at the famed Knoedler Gallery in New York (see chapter six for details on the show). Thomas, on the other hand, excelled in school, and particularly in her fine arts major in college. Yet she was not in a financial or social position to devote her time exclusively to painting until she retired from teaching art, becoming a professional painter in the 1950s and early 1960s. Dealers in Washington, DC, and New York, represented her, but she did not garner attention from the blue-chip galleries across New York (see chapter five and appendix two).

Next, gallery owner Marian Willard represented Norman Lewis and Mark Tobey through her New York gallery, and the artists knew each other. In fact, critics often compared the two, concluding that Lewis's work repeated much of Tobey's innovation, and was therefore merely redundant (see chapter seven). Both men, with little formal arts training and from working-class families, were interested in nonfigurative form throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Their output reveals a particularly close focus on line as an expressive device; however, their works illustrate the divergent ways to explore similar formal concerns.

Helen Frankenthaler and Mark Tobey, white, nonfigurative artists who were able to financially support themselves through their artistic pursuits (which for Tobey included regular teaching employment), function as brackets around all four artists; Tobey was the eldest of the four, while Frankenthaler was the youngest. Both achieved significant and early art world recognition, when they were in their mid-twenties, as well as regular criticism throughout their careers. Furthermore, their paintings have regularly sold on the auction block, with their auction records numbering in the hundreds.

New Yorkers, Helen Frankenthaler and Norman Lewis, pursued art careers from an early age. To support himself, however, Lewis maintained jobs outside of the arts throughout his life, while Frankenthaler, although independently wealthy, was successful enough in her arts career to support herself fully through this pursuit. These artists were collegial, if not friendly, with key figures of Abstract Expressionism, and yet they both maintained an artistic existence on the margins of the movement. They were thus involved with important discussions about mid-century art (through personal relationships or meetings), but were never central to any such conversations. As such, Frankenthaler and Lewis were entrenched in Abstract Expressionism, but represented a peripheral position in which to work and create.

Although the artistic careers of Helen Frankenthaler and Alma Thomas overlapped, and both artists painted in a nonfigurative idiom, their differences are evident, including their economic circumstances, locales, and opportunities. Their similarities, however, are strikingly rich in number and depth. Frankenthaler and Thomas worked into late age, with Thomas painting until she died in 1979 at the age

of 86, and Frankenthaler, working until her death in 2011. Both artists received art school training and in fact, both were the ‘artistic one’ in their families. Both subscribed to a nonfigurative mode of painting, with particular interest in the use of color to express their ideas. Their work has been associated with nature, and they titled their paintings after natural elements. Each artist rejected conversation regarding gender and race in various interviews, asserting that these components did not affect her output or reception. Similarly, however, critics have read both artists as producing gendered or racially inspired works. They were also connected through the very production of their paintings; Frankenthaler inspired key Washington Color School artists, including Kenneth Noland, whose compositions, in turn, influenced Thomas. This lineage illustrates how subsequent artists interpreted and adapted many fundamental ideas inherent in Frankenthaler’s paintings.

And finally, Norman Lewis and Alma Thomas were African American, nonfigurative, mid-century artists, committed to art making and yet never able to financially support themselves exclusively through their professional art careers. Generationally, educationally, and physically divided, they developed highly individual nonfigurative idioms. These styles are connected both by their interest in the formal properties of painting, and critics’ and scholars’ insistence on interpreting their work through the lens of race and gender.

Curators included all four artists’ output in exhibitions at prestigious museums. The themes of these shows, however, are varied and disclose how the art world received and presented the artists. A review of their exhibition history reveals that curators included Tobey’s paintings in a range of shows focused on

contemporary, significant, and vanguard art and artists, and showed Frankenthaler's work in exhibitions that were style-based, with some designed primarily around gender. Norman Lewis and Alma Thomas, too, received museum attention, albeit significantly less than Frankenthaler and Tobey (see appendix two). Of such a trend, cultural historian Maurice Berger asserts, "Only rarely do mainstream institutions acknowledge African-American artists who have engaged or modified more traditional European cultural traditions. One need only think of the exclusion of prominent African-American artists who worked in an Abstract Expressionist idiom—Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff and Romare Bearden—from the white-identified art historical canon of Abstract Expressionism."³² Furthermore, the exhibitions that included Lewis and Thomas were primarily gender and race-based.

Through all of their similarities, and despite their differences, constructions of race and gender permeate the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. Thus, I predicated the selection of these artists not only upon their parallels as significant twentieth-century nonfigurative artists, but also upon the overlapping racialized and gendered readings of their work, evident in the reception. Taken collectively, these artists reveal the ways changing constructions of race and gender influenced how the art world received them over the course of their careers.

Overview of the Chapters

I begin with a study of the artists, analyzing their styles and paintings, and evaluating the market value of their paintings. I discuss several works by each artist

³² Maurice Berger, *How Art Becomes History: Essays on Art, Society, and Culture in Post-New Deal America* (New York: Perennial, 1993), 153-154.

in detail. These paintings are indicative of the artists' idioms or represent significant shifts and transitions in the artists' styles. They are works that I consider essential to understanding the artists' output and working methodology. My descriptions of the works of art also show how scholars and critics superimpose race- and gender-based readings on the artists' paintings; a topic discussed in detail in chapters seven and eight. Next, I compare the artists, and consider how race and/or gender are inflected in their biography and work. I review and analyze the critical reception of their work, and examine the nuances in that reception, including an interrogation of how museum curators, gallery owners and art dealers, academics, and critics have evaluated and valued their painting.

Feminist analysis and reception theory are integral to my work, and form complementary tools for a reexamination of these artists' output. Feminist analysis informs my project as I work to explicate the relationship between sex, biography, and the reception of paintings by these artists.³³ Since reception is never static, but fluid and ever changing, my project illuminates the shifting perspectives and approaches of viewers, critics, and the art world in their experience of the paintings by Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. I thus utilize reception theory to

³³ Sarah Burns' essay, "The 'Earnest, Untiring Worker' and the Magician of the Brush: Gender Politics in the Criticism of Beaux and Sargent," serves as an important influence for exploring this relationship. In her work, Burns carefully examines the criticism of Cecilia Beaux and John Singer Sargent, elucidating the linguistic discrepancies evident in the criticism. However, these differences are not merely rooted in word choices, but rather function to uphold social hegemonic practices. Burns shows, "the workings of language in manufacturing gender difference and hierarchy" and as such, examines "the ways in which this language, which imposed gendered readings on paintings closely comparable in subject and style, played a powerful role in support of a specific agenda." Sarah Burns, "The 'Earnest, Untiring Worker' and the Magician of the Brush: Gender Politics in the Criticism of Beaux and Sargent," in *Critical Issues in American Art: A Book of Readings*, ed. Mary Ann Calo (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 178. She ascertains that in their reception of images, viewers imbued their observations with factors distinct from the images themselves. In a similar manner, my exploration of the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, reveals that members of the art world also incorporated socio-political ideas into their interpretations.

critique the hegemonic discourse surrounding these artists and unravel the ways critics and scholars have interpreted their paintings. Reception theory provides an important theoretical model as it is rooted in the response of the viewer/reader and places cultural and social differences at the center of critical inquiry. I examine the varying ways critics, scholars, and art world members discussed, viewed, and generally received these artists over the mid to latter part of the twentieth century.

Chapter two examines reception in the art world. It begins with an overview and analysis of reception theory, a methodology integral to my work and central to understanding how meaning is produced, interpreted, and received. Another essential component of reception, and therefore addressed in this chapter, is the fractioning of the art world. These subgroups, which construct and determine how the works of art are publically received, have various interests and agendas that often stand in contrast to one another, affecting how each receives works of art. Finally, this chapter broadly explores race and gender in the art world as these elements pertain to the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. This chapter on reception is essential because I am concerned with the study of the nature of the reception of these artists, and how that reception shaped and affected their output and careers.

Chapters three, four, five, and six serve as the factual foundation of this project. These chapters present the artists' biographies and paintings to establish how the art world received their work. In these chapters I examine their artistic development, and present Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey's personal and professional similarities and differences. However, within each biography, I selected areas to emphasize. As a result, these biographies are episodic rather than

comprehensive and uninflected, allowing for my exploration of how reception shaped the artists' lives. Finally, I analyze key works from these artists' careers to explore the stylistic foci of the artists and advance a reading of their paintings that stands in contrast to past scholarship. These chapters review the varying scholarship on each artist. In particular, it becomes clear that the body of scholarship on Helen Frankenthaler is significantly deeper and wider than the other artists. The effect of this point is that her life and works of art have been considered, connected, and explored from many angles. As a result, I have had access to more scholarship on Frankenthaler than the other artists, and been afforded the opportunity to consider the numerous contributions of past scholars of this artist. Since critics and scholars considered Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey less often and in less detail (particularly Lewis and Thomas), I have not benefited as vastly from previous scholars in their assessment of these artists.

In chapter seven, I analyze race in American art through the lens of the reception of these artists and their paintings. Since the term 'race' holds different meanings for various individuals and cultures, it is essential to explicate how I employ the concept of race in my readings of the artists, and their output and reception. I contend that the idea of race is not objective, but rather a fluctuating, subjective interpretation intended to quantify and categorize minor, often physical, distinctions, and relate such qualities to a person's ability, mental state, heritage, and culture.³⁴ The concept of race has permeated modern American life, with overt and subtle allusions to racial distinctions imbued into even the most benign of subjects.

³⁴ See Miles, "Apropos The Idea of 'Race' . . . Again," 130.

Both within and beyond academia, the meaning of the term ‘race’ is complex, varied, and fluid, with an abundance of theories of race and passionate debates about the existence of racial differences and the connection between race and physiological and mental qualities. Ivan Hannaford explains that “the word ‘race,’ as used in Western languages, is of recent origin. It entered the Spanish, Italian, French, English, and Scottish languages during the period of 1200 to 1500 and did not have the same meaning that we attach to it now.”³⁵ Rather, it connoted a “swift course” or a “trial of speed.”³⁶ Roots of modern day connotations of the word, with implications of biological differences based on color, disposition, and culture, developed in the late seventeenth century, when it was used alongside terms such as “ethnic group.”³⁷ After the cultural and social uprisings of the French and American Revolutions, Hannaford explains, “the idea of race was fully conceptualized and became deeply embedded in our understandings and explanations of the world . . . the dispositions and presuppositions of race and ethnicity were introduced—some would say ‘invented’ or ‘fabricated’—in modern times and were the outcomes of a vast excrescence of recent thought on descent, generation, and inheritance.”³⁸ Since this historical period, people have maintained a staunch determination to define themselves by such external qualities as hair, nose structure, and skin pigmentation as a way of aligning with or distancing from other people, even contending that these aspects relate to an individual’s mental and psychological state and assuming that race

³⁵ Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, 4-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

is a “historyless given.”³⁹ Rather, Hannaford asserts that race is “fundamentally an Enlightenment notion used . . . to explain complex human arrangements, such as caste and tribe, that are based on historical presuppositions and dispositions totally antipathetic to both politics *qua* politics and to race.”⁴⁰ Condensing his extensive and incisive research, Hannaford details, in his view, a brief overview of the schools of thought on race. The writer asserts,

A diligent study of this voluminous material has demonstrated that, there are three major hypotheses contending for ascendancy: Locke/Linnaeus/Blumenbach, who observed that race is a fact and may be categorized scientifically but cautioned that we should not be too firm about its boundaries; Kant, who put race all down to soul, character, and temperament inherited in the blood; and Hegel, who saw race as part of the long developmental process of history moving toward greater rationality.⁴¹

These writers reveal the history of the social construction of race, and the importance of time and culture in shaping societal views on it. Those who followed these thinkers mixed aspects of their theories to develop new concepts on race. Additionally, and of great significance, the idea of superiority is inherent in the construction of race. Academics and philosophers continue to develop and reference theories of race, revealing the fluid nature of its construction as well as the fixation on race that pervades Western society.

Within United States academic study, issues of race and race relations became topics of focus in the early twentieth century.⁴² Central to many theories of race

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 274.

⁴² In fact, throughout the nineteenth century, pseudo-science used racial difference to justify slavery. In the United States, certain, specific typologies were treated as racial categories, such as Caucasians and African Americans, thereby distinguishing the American approach to race from counterparts in

throughout this period was, “the history of the construction and reproduction of the idea of ‘race.’”⁴³ These theorists thus stand in contrast to nineteenth-century thinkers on race, who, as sociologist Robert Miles explains, “asserted that the world’s population is constituted by a number of distinct ‘races,’ each of which has a biologically determined capacity for cultural development.”⁴⁴ Early twentieth-century scientific evidence refuted such theories, paving the way for both criticism and the development of a host of contemporary theories of race and racism.⁴⁵ Central to these concepts is the assertion that race is a social and cultural construction. Art historian Martin Berger explains, “politically progressive scientists and historians have embraced the concept of race as a social product, in part, because it so effectively discredits group claims for racial superiority.”⁴⁶ It was in the 1960s—the period of the Civil Rights Movement and social upheaval and reform—however, that a plethora of theories of race developed, with extensive expansion since the 1980s.⁴⁷ I explore several interpretations of race in chapter seven, discussing it as a construct in more detail.

Europe. In their critique of many theories of race, Omi and Winant argue against a reductive view of race, noting, “Instead of exploring how groups become racially identified, how racial identities and meanings changed over time, or how conflicts shape the American policy and society, ‘mainstream’ approaches consider race as a problem of policy, of social engineering, of state management . . . Part of the confusion resides in the fact that race in the U.S. is concurrently an obvious and complex phenomenon. Everyone ‘knows’ what race is, though everyone has a different opinion as to how many racial groups there are, what they are called, and who belongs in what specific racial categories.” Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 3.

⁴³ Miles, “Apropos The Idea of ‘Race’ . . . Again,” 125.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 5.

⁴⁷ Les Back and John Solomos, “Introduction: Theorising Race and Racism” in *Theories of Race and Racism*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 6.

I am also interested in the branch of race studies that includes focus on whiteness.⁴⁸ Martin Berger asserts that according to “contemporary scholars of race, whiteness is clearly not a natural identity rooted in our genes but a malleable social product.”⁴⁹ Indeed, Berger explains that inherent in whiteness studies is the understanding that the Western construction of race and the classifying system it employed is a social creation. Berger explicates, “Virtually every study of whiteness opens with the academic commonplace that there are no significant genetic distinctions between the races, and that our system of racial classification is an invention of the West.”⁵⁰ Further, Berger notes, “there is no *biological* reason to group human populations according to skin color.”⁵¹ And yet within our culture, and specifically the realm of the art world, race remains a significant factor in analyzing the motivation behind nonfigurative components, such as palette and line. This aspect of racialized discourse permeates my readings of the critical reception of the artists herein. I explore how critics and scholars read constructions of whiteness and blackness into the artistic output of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, and the ways in which their constructed identity affects the canonization of these artists.

In chapter seven, I review the twentieth-century history of race in American art, and consider the access granted or denied to these artists, and their reception by their peers, academics, critics, the market, museums, and/or galleries. Part of the investigation is to assess how the art world talked about these artists—what

⁴⁸ See Rothenberg, *White Privilege*.

⁴⁹ Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

descriptive terms critics and scholars used and what elements of the artists' biographies they incorporated into their writings. This close analysis of critical language allows me to deconstruct its coded discourse, and investigate the extent to which an artist's constructed identity affected various forms of reception.

Chapter eight scrutinizes the artists' output in terms of gendered interpretations. It provides a brief overview of gender in twentieth-century American art, and how academics, critics, the auction market, museums, and galleries received female and male artists through the lens of preconceived stereotypes rooted in constructed sex differences. This analysis also considers the extent to which buyers responded to the formal properties of the paintings, as compared to the discourse surrounding the works.

In my examination of gendered readings throughout this dissertation, I understand gender to be a social construction rooted in perceived physical sex differences. Sociologist Judith Lorber explains in her article "The Social Construction of Gender," that "for the individual, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of what the genitalia look like at birth."⁵² Expanding upon this system of categorization, the classifying system of gender serves as a societal organizing principle. Lorber argues, "to explain why gendering is done from birth, constantly and by everyone, we have to look not only at the way individuals experience gender but at gender as a social institution. As a social institution, gender is one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives."⁵³

⁵² Judith Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender," in *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, eds. Susan Shaw and Janet Lee (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 142.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 143.

Furthermore, this social system incorporates hierarchy and stratification. Lorber asserts, “As a social institution, gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities. As part of a stratification system that ranks these statuses unequally, gender is a major building block in the social structures built on these unequal statuses.”⁵⁴ So infused into American society are these constructed social differences that they permeate our understanding of an individuals’ abilities and intentions.

Such distinctions persist in the arts as well, affecting critical readings of artists and their output. Thus not only does the gendering of American society affect people’s expectations of abilities and capacities, but it also ranks those perceived abilities and responsibilities. Lorber notes that within this system, “gender ranks men above women of the same race and class . . . The dominant categories are the hegemonic ideals, taken so for granted as the way things should be that white is not ordinarily thought of as a race, middle class as a class, or men as a gender . . . these categories define the Other as that which lacks the valuable qualities the dominants exhibit.”⁵⁵ This system directly pertains to critics’ readings of the artists discussed in this dissertation; Frankenthaler was often understood as a wealthy woman who had the luxury of approaching her craft in a leisurely way. Lewis’s status as a man was

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Judith Butler also asserts, “The limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture. This is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality.” Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12.

⁵⁵ Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender,” 143.

underscored, but within the context of his position as an African American from Harlem. Thomas, on the other hand, was read through the lens of her position as an elderly working African American woman whose nonfigurative creations were unbelievable to critics due in part to her membership in so many marginalized categories. Critics and scholars omit overt reference to sex and race from their discussions of Mark Tobey. His homosexuality, however, served as one of his marginalizing factors, wherein critics often cast his as a “dandy.”⁵⁶ I discuss these aspects of gender in detail in chapter eight, where I also provide greater context into the history of gender studies within academia.

Since my methodology incorporates feminist analysis, I explore in more detail in chapter eight the history of feminism within twentieth-century United States. Although the focus of feminist activism has changed throughout its history, there are several fundamental core values central to feminist theory, including equality, justice, and dignity.⁵⁷ Women’s studies professors Susan Shaw and Janet Lee highlight these values, asserting “feminism is inclusive and affirming of women; it celebrates women’s achievements and struggles and works to provide a positive and affirming stance toward women and womanhood.”⁵⁸ Females and males have interpreted these values in different ways over time, and as the methods for best achieving these goals have changed, feminism as a methodological construct has been amended and

⁵⁶ His age, too, may have affected his reception, as he was significantly older than members of the New York School and most other major mid-century artists working in abstraction and non-figurative form. Many critics prized youth. See Max Kozloff, “Art and the New York Avant-garde,” *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1964): 539.

⁵⁷ Susan Shaw and Janet Lee, “Women’s Studies: Perspectives and Practices,” in *Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, eds. Susan Shaw and Janet Lee (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

transformed to include new visions and ideals. However, the aforementioned central values are at the heart of feminism as a method for seeking equality among the sexes. I discuss the various waves of feminism in chapter eight, as feminists within each worked to achieve their goals with very different methods. While they share many common theories, third wave feminists diverge from second wavers in fundamental ways. Central to this chapter (and chapter seven as well) is the examination of how the reception of the artists evolved among the different subgroups of the art world. Their reception has changed in terms of its focus, language, and analysis.

Chapter nine concludes the dissertation. This chapter reviews and summarizes the arguments. Recognizing the need for further research and work on the concepts examined in this dissertation, this chapter shows how future work might benefit from consideration of the explorations and points herein.

I adhere to the aforementioned format because it allows me to provide critical material about each artist in a cogent manner. It enables me to discuss key works of art in relevant points in the dissertation. And finally, this form provides ample opportunity to examine issues of race and gender in a detailed, comparative way, separating discussion of the artists' lives from the nuanced analysis of race and gender, and examining the circumstances of their lives and careers before infusing a detailed discussion of race and gender.

Scholarly Influences

This dissertation provides a unique examination of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. Heretofore, academics have primarily considered these artists within a particular, often inhibiting, trajectory. Scholars frequently study Helen

Frankenthaler within the context of Colorfield painting, the history of women artists, or in a monographic study; they examine Alma Thomas primarily alone or alongside other African American artists; academics consider Mark Tobey singularly, or place him in a study where he is the reigning figure of the Northwest School; and finally, scholars rarely consider Norman Lewis for singular study, instead examining his life and output as they correlate to African American artists. While African American art history is marked by monographic studies, Lewis is rarely considered as a single point of study.

Furthermore, this dissertation carefully considers the varying reception by different factions of the art world, thereby probing the nuances of reception rather than viewing and interpreting it as a singular concept, and the art world as a monolithic community. In fact, as this dissertation underscores, the art world is multifaceted, consisting of multiple factions, often in conflict with one another. I examine each aspect of the art world with respect to the reception of these artists, and consider how each part fits into a larger puzzle to comprise a substantive entity.

In this dissertation, I have been informed by quintessentially postmodernist tendencies. Positing that there is no singular point from which to interpret a work of art, and that meaning is fluid and ever changing, I rely on the position that meaning is socially constructed, vulnerable to changes in time, culture, and location.⁵⁹ There are

⁵⁹ Similarly, of poststructuralism, Whitney Chadwick explains, “all forms of poststructuralism assume that meaning is constituted within language and is not the guaranteed expression of the subject who speaks it, and that there is no biologically determined set of emotional and psychological characteristics which are ‘essentially’ masculine or feminine.” Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 12. Furthermore, Chadwick describes the importance of the fluidity of meaning, noting, “Poststructuralist texts expose the role of language in deferring meaning and in constructing a subjectivity which is not fixed but is constantly negotiated through a whole range of forces—economic, cultural, and political.” *Ibid.*

thus various positions from which to view an artist and an object. I explore the nuances of this plurality throughout this dissertation, teasing apart the power relations, goals, and reactions of the art world's factions, arriving at an informed, complicated social and cultural narrative. Inherent in my work is a consideration of hierarchy and difference within the realm of reception, for these elements have been central to the artists' reception. The literature on these artists reveals that they share a variety of artistic interests and elements of their personal biographies. This observation, combined with consideration of various approaches taken by art historians in the past, affirms that American art history can benefit from the approach of this dissertation and the questions it delineates and explores.

In my work, I have been especially influenced by several key academic texts. The work of art historian Elizabeth Johns, for example, has been significant. She argues in "Histories of American Art: The Changing Quest" that American art history is marked by a slow but eventual view that art and culture are closely connected.⁶⁰ Indeed, this dissertation asserts that the reception of American art indicates that they are inseparable. Jonathan Fineberg's 1995 textbook, *Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being*, provides a useful framework, as Fineberg shapes his work around the lives of the artists he studies, rather than utilizing the classification model of art movements.⁶¹ This approach is influential because it seeks to consider how the artists' life experiences may have affected their output, and by extension, reception and success.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Johns, "Histories of American Art: The Changing Quest," *Art Journal*, 44, no. 4 (Winter, 1984): 338-344.

⁶¹ Jonathan Fineberg, *Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995).

Ann Gibson has been a valuable art historian in developing my approach. In particular, Gibson's *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics*, in which the author reevaluates Abstract Expressionism's narrative, and in particular, the Abstract Expressionist model of "universal subjectivity." Gibson argues that this major art historical movement was exclusive, and the period was marked by deeply ingrained racism, misogyny, and homophobia. She concludes that women of this period (and by extension additional marginalized persons) ought to be lauded for forging ahead in spite of discrimination.⁶² Additionally, Ann Wagner's *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* has been significant for me. In her book, Wagner argues that gender has been a determining component in the reception of art of women artists, even in the production of nonfigurative works of art. She shows that regardless of the type and style of art produced, women are nevertheless constructed as 'women' in art reception.⁶³ Further, Maurice Berger has provided important queries on the history of race in American art. Berger's *How Art Becomes History, Essays on Art, Society and Culture in Post-New Deal America*, and in particular, his essays "Race and Representation" and "Are Art Museums Racist?" from that book, provide useful considerations of race in the art world.⁶⁴

This dissertation seeks to join the conversation about nonfigurative art production, race, gender, and artists' biographies in American art history. Further, it attempts to break the confines of traditional, historical studies of the artists, to

⁶² Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁶³ Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁶⁴ See Berger, *How Art Becomes History*.

incorporate their art, lives, and reception into a single consideration, based primarily on the formal aspects of their painting, the overlapping socio-political-economic time periods in which they worked, and their similar artistic inclinations and foci. Rather than study each in a vacuum, this dissertation examines how race and gender shaped the artists' lives and reception, with lasting influence on the construction of these artists to this day.

Chapter 2: The Art World and Reception

Art world reception is central to this dissertation. Yet the variable concepts, factions, and components under the rubric of ‘reception’ are broad and complicated. I utilize the tools of reception theory to scrutinize the workings of reception in the art world and consider how its multifaceted subgroups approached and received these artists. Integrated in this methodology is concern for the receiver of an object and the changing nature of reception. As such, the socio-political history affects an individual’s experience of a work of art. This fusing of the individuality of reception with social history results in a highly nuanced understanding of reception, in which I deconstruct the very concept of ‘reception’ in order to observe and probe how the art world has constructed the narrative of these artists’ lives and works of art. These key approaches, therefore, enable a careful consideration of the role of race and gender.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Class, too, is a significant factor that permeated the reception of these artists. Although I do not focus on class in detail, as the construction of race and gender are my primary consideration, it is important to briefly consider how class affected the reception of these artists.

Class for these artists directly relates to access. Furthermore, in addition to race and gender, the art world subgroups regularly underscored class in overt or subtle ways in the reception of these artists. Firstly, Frankenthaler was born into a wealthy, Upper East Side New York family of well-connected politicians. Her station in life allowed her entry into the best private schools in New York, an excellent college education in which world-renowned professors taught her, and she regularly had the opportunity to hone her skills and interests with summer travel and schools in which famous artists taught. Further, upon entry into her chosen profession, Frankenthaler had access to arts professionals unavailable to many young artists. Additionally, because earning money was not a necessity for her, she could focus her time and energy on her chosen career of art making, devoting as much time as necessary to develop her craft. On the other side, however, many critics dismissed the artist, arguing that she did not take her work seriously. Such criticism was often based on the very fact that Frankenthaler did not have to work to make a living.

Secondly, Norman Lewis, by contrast, was born into a working-class immigrant family in Harlem, New York, in which his father worked as foreman, and his mother as a baker, seamstress, and housekeeper. Lewis’s jobs ranged from a presser to a teacher, working within and outside of the art world throughout his life to support himself. He had limited educational opportunities, and little chance to develop his craft. Lewis had to work out of necessity, and focused on his art making when away from his money-producing positions. His status as an African American man in Harlem with limited financial security thus affected his access to arts education, time to practice and produce works of art, and contact with arts professionals.

Next, class affected Alma Thomas’s career as well. Although raised in a middle class African American household, Thomas nevertheless had to earn a living, working as an art teacher for over

This chapter thus examines the various forms of art world reception with which I am primarily concerned, and the methodology I employ to probe them.

Reception Theory

Reception theory has significantly influenced my methodological approach, permeating my interpretation and reading of the artists and their works of art, as well as their critical reviews. This theoretical construct has also helped shape my understanding of how the artists in my dissertation responded to both the sociocultural context in which they worked, as well as how they reacted to specific criticism, artistic trends, and influential art theorists and movements throughout their careers. I utilize reception theory to unravel these intertwined histories with the intent of shining a new light on the artists, their artwork, and their various forms of reception. As a result, due to the considerable role reception theory has played in my work, it is necessary to provide a brief history of the development of this German literary theory as well as its adaptation in a variety of fields of cultural studies. I also outline how this theory has changed in the past several decades with its rising popularity in the humanities. And finally, I underscore the key aspects of reception

thirty years as she developed her own artistic outlook and skill. This life factor limited her access to influential critics and galleries. However, her position as a woman of some means afforded her the opportunity to attend college, where she developed important and lifelong contacts within the art world. Additionally, her career allowed her to pay for graduate school, continuing education art classes, and art materials.

Finally, Mark Tobey was also limited in his opportunities as a result of his class. Not only was he unable to regularly attend world-renowned arts institutions, but the artist also had to withdraw from school entirely at one point to help support his family. Work also determined his prospects, limiting him to places where opportunity existed; while he initially worked as a technical draftsman and letterer to help support his family when his father fell ill, he later worked as a draftsman in Chicago before moving to New York where *McCall's* employed him as a fashion illustrator. Although Tobey benefited from other personal factors, such as his race and sex, class nevertheless was a factor in this artist's access to the art world.

theory I utilize, and how these strains of thought manifest themselves in this dissertation.

German literary scholars, many of whom were affiliated with the University of Constance, developed reception theory in the 1960s.⁶⁶ Hans Robert Jaus was one of the key proponents of reception studies in the late 1960s. He recognized the tremendous interpretative gap between the text and the reader's point of view, and outlined a methodological course that could help bridge this divide.⁶⁷ Elucidating the central elements at the heart of early reception theory, Jaus argued, "Just as the producer of a text becomes also a recipient when he sets out to write, so the interpreter has to bring himself into play as reader when he wants to participate in the dialogue of literary tradition."⁶⁸ Other early and significant proponents of reception theory were Wolfgang Iser and Siegfried J. Schmidt,⁶⁹ who along with Jaus positioned their work as the new, innovative approach to literary studies. German

⁶⁶ Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), xiii.

⁶⁷ Hans Robert Jaus, "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding," in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁹ Philip Goldstein and James Machor explain that Iser's consideration of a reader's relationship to the text was akin to wandering through the path of the text, creating and recreating new experiences and interpretations. Iser proposed that a fluid interaction between reader and text could change with each interaction. The authors contend, "Wolfgang Iser maintained, for example, that readers wander through a text, constructing projections ('protentions') of new experience and reinterpretations ('retentions') of past experience." Philip Goldstein and James L. Machor, "Introduction: Reception Study: Achievements and New Directions," in *New Directions in American Reception Study*, eds. Philip Goldstein and James L. Machor, xii. Indeed, Iser argues that meaning is located in the relationship between the reader and the text. He asserts, "Central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient. This is why the phenomenological theory of art has emphatically drawn attention to the fact that the study of a literary work should concern not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text." Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 20-21.

studies scholar Robert Holub explains that reception studies, “developed in a conflict-ridden situation in German literary and political life and consequently took its place on the critical scene in a complex dialogue and debate with other methods and traditions. It not only had to fend off competing tendencies by declaring them obsolete or incomplete, but also had to assume the posture, especially in its initial phases, of rebellion and novelty.”⁷⁰ This aspect of reception studies necessitated the theory’s rejection of history’s grand narrative in favor of local and specific histories.⁷¹

However, pinpointing a linear, singular definition of this important theory proves evasive as these early theorists debated amongst themselves about the specific definition of “reception,” a central ingredient in reception theory.⁷² Holub contends, “One of the most persistent dilemmas, in fact, has been how *Rezeption* (reception) differs from *Wirkung* (usually rendered by ‘response’ or ‘effect’). Both have to do with the impact of the work on someone, and it is not clear that they can be separated completely.”⁷³ Still, scholars frequently assert that *Rezeption* is connected to the reader, whereas *Wirkung* correlates to “textual aspects” of the work of art.⁷⁴ Fundamental to reception theory, regardless of the precise meaning of *Rezeption*, is an increased and primary concern with the “text and the reader.”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Holub, *Reception Theory*, 12.

⁷¹ James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, “Introduction,” in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, xii.

⁷² Holub, *Reception Theory*, xi.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

Early proponents of reception studies reacted to or against the popular literary theories of the day, offering an alternative to current trends. As such, these scholars provided a new way to approach literary studies by offering an alternative model. Former and traditional literary models had moved through periods marked by the adoption of various foci, from the celebration of nation in literary works to a focus on the art works themselves and their formal aspects. Jauss, in contrast, deemed the social function of a work of art as essential to any understanding of a text.⁷⁶ He argued,

The gap between literature and history, between aesthetic and historical knowledge, can be bridged if literary history does not simply describe the process of general history in the reflection of its works one more time, but rather when it discovers in the course of 'literary evolution' that properly *socially formative* function that belongs to literature as it competes with other arts and social forces in the emancipation of mankind from its natural, religious, and social bonds.⁷⁷

Jauss centrally aligned the social context of the reader's reception with the work of art. He placed primacy on the reader's own beliefs, ideals, and values. These components, combined with attention to the author's historical circumstances, Jauss argued, could lead to a coherent literary study that incorporated the reader's changing historical landscape and sociocultural context.⁷⁸

The contributions of Jauss and his colleagues to the literary theory canon offered academics a distinctive approach to literature. This concentration on reception was quickly accepted, with many literary theorists incorporating reception

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷⁷ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 45.

⁷⁸ Machor and Goldstein, "Introduction," *Reception Study*, xi.

theory into their work and publishing new works reflecting this theoretical model.⁷⁹

In fact, rapid acceptance of reception theory resulted from an existing crisis in literary theory during the 1960s in which a new generation of scholars challenged the assumptions of a singular way of understanding literary works.⁸⁰ They argued for a multiplicity of meanings with the reader as central to the interpretation of texts.⁸¹

Reception theorists often focused on fundamental questions of history. In fact, many were concerned with the historical process of determining which authors and texts were significant enough to warrant study and why some gain fame while others fade into the background of history.⁸² This aspect of reception theory is particularly potent in this dissertation, as my work is concerned with how reception affects our views of artists and their output, and how reception is affected by various interlocking factors including social, political, and cultural contexts, prevalent views and understanding of race, gender, class, and privilege, and individual critical response. My interest in how reception evolves is a core component of reception theory. Of note, James Machor and Philip Goldstein explain that reception theory, which recognizes the centrality of context, inherently incorporates new and

⁷⁹ Holub, *Reception Theory*, 11.

⁸⁰ This particular conflict is marked by a broader social crisis in Germany, including the financial strains of recession and political changes and challenges. It may also have been part of a larger post-war intellectual crisis, as represented by the *historikerstreit*. See Holub, *Reception Theory*, 7-8, and Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction*.

⁸¹ Literary theorists endeavored to establish new methods of literary analysis that was unlike what they deemed to be homogeneous approaches.

⁸² Holub highlights this dilemma: “As Jauss and others have noted, the question of reception is intimately linked to the writing of history. Why a given work or author becomes famous, how that fame is perpetuated over periods of time, what factors increase or diminish a reputation—all of these questions involve the historian as much as the sociologist or psychologist.” Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction*, 47.

developing approaches because regular reevaluation of the ‘interpretative practice’ is fundamental to reception study.⁸³ They argue that it is essential that reception theorists recognize the social, political, historical, cultural, and personal vantage point of the recipient of a work of art in order to understand how that individual arrived at his or her reading of that object.

Jauss’s approach to reception theory extends beyond literary history, overlapping with the visual aspects of the arts. In fact, the theoretician asserted, “art history and social history enter into a relationship that raises a new question: whether the history of art, which is usually regarded as a dependent ‘poor relative’ of general history, might not once have been the head of the family, and might not once again become a paradigm of historical knowledge.”⁸⁴ While I dispute Jauss’s reading of art history’s historical standing, his focus on the relevance of social history and context in reading a work of art is highly relevant to this dissertation. He argued that the amalgamation of social history and reception theory with art history could result in a highly relevant, novel, and lasting way to study and analyze art and artists. Jauss argued that “art historiography can win back its disputed legitimacy insofar as it seeks out and describes the canons and contexts of works, rejuvenating the great wealth of human experience preserved in past art, and making it accessible to the perception of the present age.”⁸⁵ The methodologies of Jauss and reception theorists have been useful in interpreting the artists addressed in this dissertation, and their criticism and

⁸³ Machor and Goldstein, “Introduction,” *Reception Study*, xii.

⁸⁴ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 48.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

reception. This dissertation describes the contexts in which these artists lived and produced art, as well as that of the critics and factions of the art world that received their work over the course of several decades, and how the art world's initial perceptions have since been adopted and adapted by subsequent critics, gallery owners, museum curators, and auction house officials.

Scholars of contemporary reception theories developed in the last twenty years have accepted Jauss's emphasis on the reader's changing contexts, taking into account a text's various and multiple readers. In their 2008 book on reception study, Goldstein and Machor maintain that reception study "says that an audience's interpretative practices explain a work's meaning."⁸⁶ Scholars can thus examine a single work of art from a variety of perspectives, utilizing innumerable interpretative models, from formalism to post-structuralism, from Marxism to feminism, thereby maintaining the premise that each of these perspectives creates distinct readings of the work at hand. Each approach focuses on certain aspects of a work of art while simultaneously disregarding other features. Machor and Goldstein argue, "These studies admit that divergent schools of interpretation produce equally divergent readings but still consider the quest for a rational consensus desirable and even obligatory."⁸⁷ This multiplicity was at the heart of Jauss's theory. He argued that future generations often better understand a text's meaning than those contemporaneous to the text's creation. In his own words, Jauss notes, "The very effect of history and the interpretation of an event or work of the past enables us to

⁸⁶ Goldstein and Machor, "Introduction," *New Directions*, xii.

⁸⁷ Machor and Goldstein, "Introduction," *Reception Study*, xi.

understand it as a plurality of meanings that was not yet perceivable to its contemporaries.”⁸⁸ Historical distance therefore allows space for interpretation because with time, society incorporates additional ways to appreciate a single object or idea, and enhances its original meaning.⁸⁹

Since the 1980s, reception theory has morphed, altered by its scholarly adaptations in multiple fields. In fact, echoing Jauss’s attention to numerous interpretations of a single work of art, Machor and Goldstein argue that a key aspect of reception theory is its inherent diversity. The authors explicate, “Initially a way of explaining an author’s development, reception study has become an important mode of historical inquiry because to rehabilitate the historical method discredited by formalist criticism, reception study limits or rejects the transformative force of theoretical ideals and examines the changing ‘reading formations’ or ‘interpretive communities’ governing readers’ practices.”⁹⁰ Central to reception theory, despite its divergent paths however, is the significance of the reader’s context, which affects the understanding and position of the text. Academics have thus shifted from Jauss’s original, traditional approach—which includes concern for how context affects the maker in addition to the reader’s varying circumstance—to modes that incorporate a variety of methodologies. The overwhelming number of publications from fields such as media studies, history of reading and the book, mass communication and literary critical studies, demonstrates the endless variations of Jauss’s original

⁸⁸ Jauss, “The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding,” 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

⁹⁰ Machor and Goldstein, “Introduction,” *Reception Study*, xiv.

reception model. Inherent in all of these considerations, however, is the focus on meaning's fluidity and the receiver's personal circumstances and context, and the consideration of a person's relationship to the text, how these elements change, and how such changes ultimately determine a particular meaning.⁹¹

Tony Bennett, for example, focuses on "poststructuralisms" and history.⁹² Central to his consideration is the relationship between "texts and readers," in which Bennett examines how text and context interact, "not as a set of extra discursive relations, but as a set of intertextual and discursive relations that produce readers for texts, and texts for readers."⁹³ In fact, this inquiry leads Bennett to question how to examine each element in this equation of text, reader, and context, and the potential for separating these components, which are often assumed to be static in their relationship. Bennett suggests, "they are variable functions within a discursively ordered set of relations. Different reading formations, that is to say, produce their own texts, their own readers, and their own contexts."⁹⁴ Thus, Bennett questions the very nature of fixed meaning, suggesting that the meaning of an object is not only in the personal circumstances of the reader, the context in which that individual is receiving that object, and the text itself, but also in the variations within and among

⁹¹ See, for example, Tony Bennett, "Texts in History: the Determinations of Readings and their Texts," in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, 61-74, and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁹² Bennett, "Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and their Texts," 61.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

each of these elements. He adds a layer of complexity and fluidity to reception theory.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s essay, "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition," represents another direction of modern reception theory, exploring how contemporary academics have considered race within this methodology. In his discussion of the black literary tradition, Gates considers the relationship between social institutions and literature.⁹⁵ In particular, he argues that contemporary discrimination has historically affected literary reception. Gates asserts that historically, "Blacks could not achieve any true presence by speaking, since their 'African'-informed English seems to have only underscored their status as *sui generis*, as distinct in spoken language use as in their peculiarly 'black' color. If they were to signify as full members of the Western human community, they would have to do so in their writings."⁹⁶ Gates explores the context of the literary reception of texts produced by slaves, free blacks, and African Americans post-slavery, and how literacy and the production of such texts "would serve as an argument against the bestial status of black people."⁹⁷ These writers, Gates contends, "suffered under the sheer burden of literacy: to demonstrate that the person of African descent was indeed a human being."⁹⁸ However, Gates argues that the racist impulse to negate black intellectual

⁹⁵ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition," in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, eds. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, 105. See also: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁹⁶ Gates, "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition," 107.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

ability led to the assertion that no black literary history existed. The keepers of the dominant literary canon, therefore, worked to write black creation out of history.⁹⁹ Gates thus considers how the original reception of black literary works affected subsequent generations' understanding of this history.

The scholarship of Bennett and Gates relates to my work in important ways. First, Bennett's very questioning of fixed meaning, combined with his interest in a variety of sources to locate meaning, has significant ramifications in my work. His scholarly influence has impacted my utilization of reception theory. The work of Gates, too, has helped direct the course of reception theory in my project. Both his poignant comments about race and reception theory, and his application of the methodology to relocate and question historical meaning within the literary canon has further impressed upon me the fluidity of meaning and interpretation.

My work borrows and fuses multiple aspects of reception theory. I merge Jauss's work—with his concern for the maker's context and interactions with the work, environment, and contemporary theories—with careful consideration of the context of the receiver of a work of art. I am also concerned with how each of these multiple elements changes within the course of an individual's life and after, and thus the fact that meaning is never fixed, but rather, fluid, changing, and adapting to alterations in any of these components. However, within all of these changes, I am interested in patterns, which manifest themselves across generations and locations, often exposing a particular, underlying, common denominator.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 113.

The Art World and Its Subgroups

The workings of reception theory are evident in, and integral for, a close examination of how the various factions of the art world received these artists. Thus, as a methodological construct, reception theory improves understanding of the nuances of reception. It, therefore, allows for enhanced consideration of the varied role of race and gender in the reception of these artists.¹⁰⁰ However, in order to delineate the detailed art world reception of these artists utilizing the tools of reception theory, it is first necessary to provide an overview of its subgroups.

The art world is composed of a multifaceted group of intertwined stakeholders, each with its own interests, agendas, and motivations for its views. From critics, artists, academics, and museum curators to gallery owners and auction house officials, each segment of the art world is motivated by fundamentally different yet linked concerns. Throughout the twentieth century, the art world has integrated social, political, and cultural interests, and is therefore closely aligned with United States social and cultural practices. Maurice Berger proclaims, “Ruled by the interests of upper-class white patrons, the art world has long accepted the mythology of its own social removal . . . The Baudelairean dandy, a hallmark of the early modernist conceptions of the role of the artist in society, celebrated his distance from the grimy reality of a new, urbanized Paris by refusing to self-identify with a specific

¹⁰⁰ I specifically chose a matrix of four individuals whose output has been primarily nonfigurative: a white, Jewish woman, an African American man, an African American woman, and a white, homosexual man. This particular mix has allowed me to study how race and gender affected each artist’s career, critical reception, and market performance (the dollar value assigned to an artist’s work by the art market).

economic class.”¹⁰¹ Connecting this assertion to mid-twentieth-century America, Berger continues, “For the critic Clement Greenberg . . . formalism could serve as a way out of the harsh realities of late-industrial society, but only as a *negation* of social reality—as a metaphysical transcendence from politics and mass culture (or what he called ‘kitsch’).”¹⁰²

The art world has also shown discriminatory practices that exist in society. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. observes, “Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in the mid-1960s and the subsequent emergence of the black power and black esthetic movements, the received stereotypes of black people, though extensively critiqued by black artists and writers, still obtain.”¹⁰³ Thus, ideologies that permeate American society-at-large influence and pervade the interlocking forces of the art world. This complex system of relationships shapes and determines the construction of artists and the publics’ views of their lives and output. For example, differentiating museums from the marketplace, curator Edward Henning asserts, “For a museum the appreciation in market value of a work of art over a five or ten year period is not important. The values that matter are aesthetic.”¹⁰⁴ While museums are invariably concerned with market value at some point, determining what comprises aesthetic value, Henning explains, involves seeking the established opinions of other art world segments. He writes that the primary purpose of the art

¹⁰¹ Maurice Berger, *How Art Becomes History: Essays on Art, Society, and Culture in Post-New Deal America* (New York: Perennial, 1993), xvii-xviii.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 178. (Gates is quoted here in conversation with Maurice Berger.)

¹⁰⁴ Edward B. Henning, “The Museum and the Avant-Garde,” *Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1970): 20.

museum is “to preserve, exhibit, study, and interpret important works of art. The museum staff attempts to determine which these are through a combination of knowledge and taste: knowledge about the provenance of a work of art, its condition, its place within the oeuvre of the artist; and about the opinions of historians, critics, and connoisseurs regarding the significance of the artist and the work.”¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, gallery owners and collectors demonstrate different interests.¹⁰⁶ Henning explains that New York galleries, vying for attention and business, have integrated various tactics to sway buyers. He writes, “Collectors have discovered that the New York galleries showing contemporary art offer a sophisticated kind of amusement . . . In short, there is an element of ‘show biz’ in many exhibitions.”¹⁰⁷ Thus gallery owners create and promote the story of their artists’ works and lives, presenting a filtered view to the public.¹⁰⁸ Since artists rely on galleries for exposure, which increases critical consideration and potential market viability, galleries are powerful entities providing or denying access. Museum educator H.T. Niceley highlights the importance of access: “Access is power. To realize one’s potential in the areas of one’s artistic interests and skills, one must have access to basic training systems as well as opportunity for public exhibition and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 12, in Chapter 1, for sources on the art market.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁸ Writing for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in 1975, one reporter asserted, “The art gallery business is a very private one, and nobody knows what the other dealer is making . . . One of the most commonly heard stories about New York dealers – the big ones– that it is how they manipulate the market through false bidding at auctions, getting curators to give artists major shows, seducing the influential press to give good reviews.” “The Public Doesn’t Always Buy What It ‘Should,’” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 30, 1975, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

sales.”¹⁰⁹ However, exposure alone does not determine success. Galleries are an art world entity, which determine and establish the way the public views artists. Underscoring galleries’ role in constructing the artist, sociologist Olav Velthuis asserts, “Contemporary art dealers maintain that they aspire to distribute art for history, not for the market. At seminars and expert meetings . . . they spoke of their galleries as a ‘place for experimentation,’ a ‘vehicle for ideas,’ and a ‘mild biotope’ in which art can flourish. Rather than providing a ‘showcase for commodities,’ they aimed at engaging in a ‘privileged dialogue with the artist.’”¹¹⁰ As central as profit is to the strength of galleries, nevertheless, these entities work to distance themselves from the explicit display of that association. Instead, gallery owners underscore their personal relationship with artists, implying a correlation between that bond and their special knowledge and understanding of the artist.

Critical reception proves to be a powerful force that significantly influences other art world factions. My analysis of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey shows that critics have been a power within the art community that constructs narratives and maintains barriers to entry by new artists. Art theorist Isabelle Graw notes that various art world entities, including the critical component, “help create the symbolic value of art—which is necessary for the art’s desirability and market value in the long term.”¹¹¹ Graw asserts that “symbolic value” is a necessary component in the marketability and ultimate sales of artists’ works. She further explains the

¹⁰⁹ H.T. Niceley, “A Door Ajar: The Professional Position of Women Artists,” *Art Education* 45, no. 2 (March 1992): 6.

¹¹⁰ Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 21.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Ai Weiwei and Amy Cappellazzo, et al., “Art and Its Markets: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Artforum International* (April 2008): 299.

correlation between market and symbolic value, “art is a commodity of a special kind: The market value of art is based on the assumption that it possesses a symbolic value that money actually can’t buy. The ultimate legitimation for its price is its pricelessness.”¹¹² Critics contributed to either the allure and mystique of artists, or their relegation to the margins of the art world, by writing the initial story that influenced other segments of the art world.

None of the artists examined here received overwhelming critical consideration comparable to major mid-century male artists. Moreover, when addressing their work, critics used an overt or subtle race- and gender-based lens. Tobey’s critical attention may have been limited by the fact that he painted primarily on paper and frequently worked outside of the United States for long periods throughout his life.¹¹³ However, his sexual orientation may have been a factor in keeping critics at bay. In fact, early critics omitted close analysis of his life, evidenced by the glaring omission of much of his biography from the critical reviews (see chapter six). Frankenthaler’s critics both praised her works and relegated her to the margins of the art world by regularly reasserting her status as a ‘woman artist,’ and the inferior ‘feminine’ quality of her works (see chapter three). Finally, critics considered Lewis and Thomas less often than Frankenthaler and Tobey, and refused

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ John Russell, for example, declared, “It will not have escaped the student of such matters that the art market has at last caught up with Mark Tobey, and that his name now figures on the list of painters most sought after by unnamed ‘investors.’ Doubtless, this would have happened years ago, had it not been for the fact that Mr. Tobey is the most steadfast of absentees from his native country.” John Russell, “Art: Welcome Tribute to Mark Tobey,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 1974, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

to read their paintings without infusing often explicit gendered and race-based components (see chapters four and five).

Finally, the auction market is a strong barometer of the ‘symbolic’ and market value of a work, which serves to influence other segments of the art world. Velthuis asserts, “Auction prices have earned their status of a reliable and preferred standard of value because of their responsiveness to supply and demand, and because of their public character. Major auctions are covered by newspapers and magazines, and their prices are publicly available.”¹¹⁴ Further, although the art market is an inefficient market based on buyers’ and sellers’ perception of the ‘quality’ of an artist’s work, various forces influence it, underscoring its malleability and subjectivity. These components include social forces, artists’ biographies, the mood of buyers and sellers, supply and demand, and the opinions of the other art world members, including critics, gallery owners, academics, and museum officials.¹¹⁵ My research shows that the artists’ biographies play an integral role in market performance, influenced by key players and impacting buyers.

The Reception of Race and Gender in the Art World

A society’s understanding of concepts such as race and gender are subject to the time, location, and the dominant beliefs of that society. These notions change, and as a result, so, too, do a society’s constructions of race and gender, forming new ‘truths’ about these concepts. Art historian Michael Baxandall examines meaning-

¹¹⁴ Velthuis, *Talking Prices*, 83.

¹¹⁵ See Iain Robertson, “Introduction: The Economics of Taste,” in *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, ed. Iain Robertson, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 1-9, and Velthuis, *Talking Prices*.

making in fifteenth-century Italian pictures, observing and underscoring the fundamental role of context. His points are integral to a study of reception in art. He asserts, “the picture is sensitive to the kinds of interpretive skill—patterns, categories, inferences, analogies—the mind brings to it.”¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Baxandall contends, “one brings to the picture a mass of information and assumptions drawn from general experience.”¹¹⁷ Therefore, in order to comprehensively evaluate the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, it is necessary to examine how society used race and gender, and how these constructs shaped opinion and outlook, and in turn, influenced the varying segments of the mid to late twentieth-century art world. In the end, the construction of race and gender create expectations about acceptable behavior and viewpoints, social paradigms that Maurice Berger calls “The scientific, political, or cultural imperative to maintain normative standards.”¹¹⁸ Berger explains that using these tools, scholars can lay the foundations for “society’s relentless need to establish ‘truth.’ What determines this ‘truth’ in any society is a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, and articulation of the dominant ideologies of society at large.”¹¹⁹ In fact, sociologist Michael Eric Dyson poignantly states,

The notion that America has ever been purely anything – racial, sexual, religious, or otherwise – flies in the face of the edifying impurity that is the breadth of democracy. To say that America is composed of separate black and white nations is a useful political fiction cobbled together from

¹¹⁶ Michael Baxandall, *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 1988), 34.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹⁸ Berger, *How Art Becomes History*, 82-83.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the fragments of historic resistance to invisibility. It is meant to combat the unchallenged power of elites to name the state of affairs along the color line, even as they exploit the belief that America is a largely realized dream.¹²⁰

Dyson underscores the point that truth and understanding in a society are relative and fluid around concepts such as race and gender. Moreover, he argues that such power relations are problematic to shift.

Racism and sexism create an ideology based on one fundamental factor: difference, a common element characteristic of most totalizing concepts. They do so by categorizing people. Philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff explains,

Arguing via Foucault, both Cornell West and David Theo Goldberg have attempted genealogies of modern racism that link the western fetishistic practices of classification, the forming of tables, and the consequent primacy of the visible with the creation of metaphysical and moral hierarchies between racialized categories of human beings. Given this genesis, the concept of race and of racial difference emerged as that which is visible, classifiable, and morally salient.¹²¹

Alcoff further contends that contemporary work on modern theories of race may be broadly explained by three primary positions. First, scholars argue, “Race is not real, principally because recent science has invalidated race as a salient or even meaningful biological category.”¹²² The next position of various race theorists is that race is the central component of identity. Thus it is “always politically salient.”¹²³ And finally, the work of scholars of race illustrates that race is a social construct and as a result, fluid, “historically malleable, culturally contextual, and produced through learned

¹²⁰ Tricia Rose, et al., “Race and Racism: A Symposium,” *Social Text* 42 (Spring 1995): 13.

¹²¹ Linda Martin Alcoff, “The Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment,” in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 268.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 270.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

perceptual practice.”¹²⁴ The reception of these artists reveals that race is indeed consistently relevant and perpetually changing. Discussed in detail in the biographical selections comprising chapters three, four, five, and six, as well as in the chapters focusing primarily on race (chapter seven) and gender (chapter eight), the art world demonstrates a propensity towards integrating concern for race and gender in the reception, revealing the social influence of these constructs.¹²⁵

What is true for racism is also true for sexism. Race, as a topic of social discourse, has been the overarching debate in mid to late twentieth-century America. From the Civil Rights Movement and the legislation that followed, race relations have been a topic of discussion in the media, academia, and the general population. Similarly, gender relations and feminism are social discourses that have risen to prominence within academic discussion, gaining extensive media coverage in the society-at-large. However, this attention has done little to eradicate the sexism that affects the demand for artworks by female artists, nor has it quelled the tendency to infuse gender-based readings into the interpretation of works by male and female artists alike. Art historian Griselda Pollock explains, “Inasmuch as society is structured by unequal relations at the point of material production, so too is it deeply founded on unequal relations between the sexes. The nature of the societies in which

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ As inclusion of these totalizing concepts into the reception has led to the prevention of access for many artists, it is not unexpected that Norman Lewis would protest the Metropolitan Museum’s 1968 exhibition *Harlem on My Mind*, for its exclusion of many local Harlem artists. Maurice Berger argues, “Sad to say, with regard to race, art museums have for the most part behaved like many other businesses in this country – they have sought to preserve the narrow interests of their upper-class patrons and clientele.” Berger, *How Art Becomes History*, 146.

art has been produced has not only been, for instance, feudal or capitalist, but in historically varied ways, patriarchal and sexist.”¹²⁶

The history of feminism is organized into waves, demarcating historical and ideological distinctions in feminists’ approaches to seeking equality. These waves elucidate very different attitudes and approaches to feminism, as discussed in chapter eight.¹²⁷ In 1999, artist and writer Mira Schor highlighted the distinctions between contemporary and early feminists. She comments, “In ‘From Liberation to Lack,’ an essay I wrote for *Heresies* in 1987, I noted that ‘Feminism has little institutional memory, there has been no collective absorption of early achievements and ideas, and therefore feminism cannot yet afford the luxury of storage.’”¹²⁸ Thus, she observes that the lessons of feminism are incorporated into contemporary approaches without appropriating its history.

Art historian Amelia Jones echoes Schor’s point in writing, “I do think that feminism, like most of the impassioned rights discourses from the 1950s into the 1980s, has gone somewhat underground. It’s as if we have theorized ourselves out on a limb and don’t know where to go next.”¹²⁹ She reviews the accomplishments of the movement and expresses concern over its future. Jones declares, “now that we’ve identified and excoriated the male gaze, proposed various female gazes (not by any

¹²⁶ Griselda Pollock, “Women, Art and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 4, no. 1 (Spring – Summer, 1983): 39.

¹²⁷ Many individuals refuse to align themselves with any form of feminism. See Lisa Marie Hogeland, “Fear of Feminism, Why Young Women Get the Willies,” in *Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, eds. Susan Shaw and Janet Lee (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 722-725.

¹²⁸ Mira Schor, et al., “Contemporary Feminism: Art Practice, Theory, and Activism – An Intergenerational Perspective,” *Art Journal* 58, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 23.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

means necessarily heterosexually-, middle-class-, or Anglo-identified), and argued for the specificity of women's experience in relation to visual culture, we seem to have all the answers but none of the intellectual humility that is required to move us to a new place."¹³⁰ The course of feminism thus depends on how those seeking equal opportunity for the sexes envision a future in which difference is not equated with hierarchy. In fact, Judith Butler, for instance, has called into question perceived differences, thereby challenging the very notions about sex that much of American society assumes to be factual and truthful.¹³¹ The future of feminism, in many ways, is contingent upon observing history's lessons as well as navigating through the fluid terrain of the contemporary interpretation of difference.

In examining the effects of the construction of race and gender on the art world, thus, the question becomes: who controls the dialectic relationship between art and society? In the mid to late twentieth-century United States, the answer is that the control lays in an intertwined system that includes critics, gallery owners, and museums, collectors, and the auction market. These forces dictate which artists are able to rise to fame, and which are marginalized to the periphery of the art world. Further, by presenting Alma Thomas as an elderly-African American-woman-sitting in the kitchen, for example, her critics were echoing the 1970s society-at-large, marked by a struggle with the incorporation of women – and especially African American women – into the workforce.¹³² Scholars and critics similarly treated race

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 9.

¹³² Lisa Saltzman, for example, writes, "The demographic shifts that took place throughout America during and after the war saw their reproduction in the aesthetic microcosm of the New York School

in such an overt manner in their reading of Norman Lewis's work, determining that his art primarily signifies his experiences and outlook as an African American man, rather than illustrating his concern with the formal properties of painting. Critics used the language of their writing to construct him as an 'angry-brooding' African American man (see chapter seven).¹³³

Helen Frankenthaler's reception was fundamentally affected by three distinct factors, often underscored in the gendered readings of her life and work. First, she had the benefit of an intimate relationship with her chosen companions, the famed art critic, Clement Greenberg, as well as one of the leaders of the art world, Robert Motherwell. Second, Frankenthaler's background indicates that she acquired a significant inheritance at a very young age, providing her with a social independence not afforded to a majority of women in her time. She did not have to work, and she could pursue her passion for art. Third, Frankenthaler developed a new method of art making that led to her renown. The role that her development of soak-stain played in the adoption of her work, and its favorable reception cannot be overstated.

Nevertheless, even Frankenthaler's critics read her work through her biography, superimposing her physical attributes onto those of the canvas as a way of

painting, where women emerged alongside men as principal practitioners. Although women artists did not perform the same vital function for the national economy as Rosie the Riveter, the war did afford women artists opportunities they might not otherwise have had . . . As in other industries and professions, once established in their careers, Frankenthaler and other women artists did not retreat from their newly attained positions, nor did their continued presence in the artistic sphere after the war go unnoticed." Lisa Saltzman, "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, eds., Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 374.

¹³³ Robert Bernasconi, "The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances," in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 288.

diminishing the integrity of her work by dismissing it for its ‘feminine’ qualities.¹³⁴ Presenting her race as an assumed norm, thereby upholding the pervasive view that her whiteness was invisible, critics concentrated their attention on explicitly interpreting her palette as ‘feminine,’ and as a result, her work as weak (see chapter eight).

Although critics overtly omitted Mark Tobey’s race and gender from their discussions of the artist, in fact, it was this suppression and implicit language that paved the way for the kinds of accolades he received. Critics reserved different terminology for certain artists. Mark Tobey, as a white man practicing an unconventional religion in America, was given a place of reverie and erudite vision, with critics coding his whiteness through their underscoring of his universal appeal and veiling his homosexuality by describing him as an eclectic arts aficionado. Lauding him as an artistic prophet, critics positioned Tobey as an artist who could show America a deeper way of thinking through his paintings.

The numerous factions of the art world read race and gender into their interpretations of these artists’ work, reinforcing distinctions. These subgroups have different goals and ideals, and nevertheless are commonly grouped together under the collective rubric of ‘the art world,’ without their demarcating factors illuminated. Each expresses its highly specific and individualized ideas, influencing one another, explored fully throughout this dissertation. These interests are evident in the

¹³⁴ Saltzman argues that critics read gender into male abstract artists working in a similar idiom as Frankenthaler and employing the stain technique in their work; however, they reclaimed the ‘masculine’ components of the style, and praised the work. Saltzman explains that critics integrated gendered interpretations into their reading of Morris Louis, to very different ends from Frankenthaler’s criticism. She writes, “That Louis’s painting, despite its fundamental indebtedness and similarity to Frankenthaler’s stain painting, could be constructed as supremely and singularly different, and ultimately, supremely and singularly masculine, was a critical fiction that persisted despite the more nuanced interpretations of later critics.” Saltzman, “Reconsidering the Stain,” 378.

reception and construction of the lives, careers, and works of art of Frankenthaler,
Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey.

Chapter 3: Helen Frankenthaler: A Tale of Feminist Opportunism

Life Overview

Helen Frankenthaler, born December 12, 1928, on New York's Upper East Side, to Martha Lowenstein and Alfred Frankenthaler, was the youngest of three daughters in a "close-knit family."¹³⁵ She and her sisters, Marjorie and Gloria, grew up in Manhattan. Frankenthaler benefited from her cultured and progressive family, in which her parents encouraged their children to pursue an education, develop curiosities, and prepare for careers in their chosen fields.

For Frankenthaler, even at an early age, this interest was in creating works of art. Not only did her family regard her as "the Artistic one,"¹³⁶ but according to curator John Elderfield, she also gained attention for her artistic ability in her youth. Implying the notion of the "genius artist," Elderfield explains, "at ten years of age she won an honorable mention in an annual art competition run by a famous New York store . . . this surprising achievement caused her delighted parents to encourage her to paint . . . None of this . . . is to be linked to the art we know, only to the embryology of the artist."¹³⁷ Her parents thereby encouraged her to develop her talent.

Frankenthaler's father, Alfred Frankenthaler, a New York State Supreme court judge, was active in state politics and had an elite network of connections. He died of cancer in 1940, and Governor Lehman and Mayor La Guardia were honorary pallbearers at his funeral, underscoring his prominence. Her mother was born in

¹³⁵ John Elderfield, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1989), 12.

¹³⁶ Amei Wallach, "Arts and Craftiness," *Ms.* 1-2, (July 18, 1989): 25.

¹³⁷ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 13.

Germany, immigrated to the United States with her family at a young age, and died in April of 1954.¹³⁸ Helen Frankenthaler was thus the product of a “privileged Park Avenue Jewish background.”¹³⁹

Painting provided Frankenthaler with a feeling of security at a time when her family life was still reeling with a sense of instability, due to her father’s untimely death when she was eleven.¹⁴⁰ Frankenthaler recalled, “After he died, I was very depressed, but of course a child of 11 doesn’t know she’s depressed . . . She just feels terrible and frightened and alone.”¹⁴¹ According to *Time* magazine, Frankenthaler was in “a very bad state, suffering a real childish sense of life and death”¹⁴² and found that her painting class alone enabled her to lose herself.¹⁴³ The artist thus focused her energy on art making, an outlet that provided her with a path through the family crisis. Indeed Frankenthaler was not only emotionally alone at this time, but physically, too; her sisters returned to boarding school after their father died. And mirroring the personal shock in her life, the society-at-large was on a precipice, as well. The involvement of the United States in World War II started shortly after Judge Frankenthaler’s death, adding to an already chaotic and turbulent time.

Frankenthaler attended private schools Horace Mann, Brearley, and Dalton School (where she transferred her senior year). In 1944-45, during her last year of

¹³⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴⁰ “Heiress to a New Tradition: Frankenthaler’s Floating Radiance,” *Time* 93, no. 13 (March 28, 1969): 64.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Deborah Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1989, 62.

¹⁴² “Heiress to a New Tradition,” 64.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

high school, Frankenthaler discovered her potential for art making. She was under the tutelage of painter Rufino Tamayo at Dalton, who educated her in the rudimentary elements of painting and art making. He encouraged Frankenthaler to visit museums and galleries. Not only was he the first professional artist she had known, but he also taught her about Cubism as a movement and Picasso as its leading proponent. From this exposure, she developed what Elderfield describes as her “obsession” with art.¹⁴⁴

In the spring of 1946, Frankenthaler started at Bennington College in Vermont, a small, progressive liberal arts college for women (which did not become co-educational until 1969). Here, world-renowned figures taught Frankenthaler. For example, she learned psychology from Erich Fromm, poetry from W.H. Auden, and took courses in criticism from Kenneth Burke and art from Paul Feely (who stressed Cubism). She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Bennington in 1949.

During the summer of 1948, Frankenthaler traveled to Europe, viewing both Old Master paintings and modern works of art. This trip cemented her desire to commit to painting as a career.¹⁴⁵ That fall, she rented a studio with her friend Sonya Rudikoff, a recent Bennington graduate and aspiring writer on East 21st Street, between Second and Third Avenues. This rental allowed her to complete her third and final nonresident Bennington term in New York, as her mentor Paul Feeley sent seniors to study in Manhattan with either Hans Hofmann or Australian painter Wallace Harrison.

¹⁴⁴ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 13.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

Frankenthaler chose the less popular Harrison, and from him learned Cubist styles through intense, detailed analysis and practice, and regular viewing of Cubist works in New York's galleries and museums.¹⁴⁶ After college, she returned home to live with her mother, and maintained her East 21st Street studio. Under pressure from her family to choose and train for a 'legitimate' career, the artist soon began attending graduate noncredit classes in history at Columbia. However, within months, Frankenthaler quit, as she wanted to be a painter. In December of 1949, she turned twenty-one and gained legal control of her inheritance from her father. This financial freedom allowed Frankenthaler to pursue her artistic interests. Within a month, she left home for an apartment, which she shared with her friend Gaby Rogers, and began working full-time as a painter.¹⁴⁷

In 1950, the Jacques Seligmann and Company Gallery asked Frankenthaler to organize a benefit exhibition of work by Bennington alumnae, to take place in May. In the hopes of developing interest in the show, the artist sent invitations to influential members of the art world, including Clement Greenberg, the famed critic who helped establish the career of Jackson Pollock, and who wrote for *The Nation* and *Partisan Review*. Greenberg accepted the invitation and upon meeting Frankenthaler told her that her paintings were the worst in the show.¹⁴⁸ It was subsequent to this encounter that Frankenthaler and Greenberg started a romantic affair, which lasted until 1955.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁸ "Heiress to a New Tradition," 64.

The years between 1950 and 1955 were therefore significant for the artist personally, and professionally. They are the first of three periods in Frankenthaler's artistic output that I examine in detail throughout this chapter, including the years 1955 to 1960, and 1960 to 1965, which were pivotal turning points in Frankenthaler's stylistic development. I chose to delineate her early career with these demarcations because she dramatically reworked her output over the course of these fifteen years, with clear distinctions between each five-year period. Furthermore, the criticism of these periods (and even the lack thereof), established the reception of Frankenthaler, with subsequent critics and scholars reiterating early critical observations. These three periods are thus particularly significant because they determined Frankenthaler's reception and canonization.

Clement Greenberg and a Network Gained

The period of 1950 to 1955 was one of great importance for Frankenthaler. At 21 years old, in a relationship with influential art critic Clement Greenberg, Frankenthaler was able to continue her arts education in a way inaccessible to most. Critic Deborah Solomon explains, "She and Greenberg attended exhibitions, compared notes on paintings, and fraternized with artists at the fabled Cedar Bar. On vacations in the country, they set up easels and sat side-by-side painting landscape. They traveled to Europe, too."¹⁴⁹ Further, Solomon asserts, "Greenberg introduced her to all the leaders of the New York School and she suddenly found herself socializing with artists she'd once read about in *Life* magazine."¹⁵⁰ And finally,

¹⁴⁹ Solomon, "Artful Survivor," 62.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Solomon notes, “As Greenberg recalls, ‘When I first met Helen, she was a standard Cubist just out of college. Abstract Expressionism changed her direction.’”¹⁵¹

This relationship is one of many that demonstrates Frankenthaler’s propensity for securing male mentors including Greenberg, Tamayo, Paul Feeley, and Jackson Pollock. Art critic Amei Wallach suggests “she [Frankenthaler] evolved an unerring antenna for male mentors and supporters that served her throughout her life.”¹⁵²

Elderfield also commented on this tendency, noting, “Frankenthaler’s early attachment to the series of older male mentors . . . crucially influenced the development of her mature art.”¹⁵³ However, the issue of mentorship is more complicated, and connects to mid-century female artists in general who were in a precarious position in terms of their sex and reception. Not only were few prominent female mentors in place with whom Frankenthaler could study, but also of significance is the fact that Frankenthaler may have sought male mentors to avoid pigeonholing herself as a ‘woman artist’ by associating too closely with female artists.¹⁵⁴

Although Greenberg did not actively promote Frankenthaler’s work in print, he undeniably helped her in the development of her art making. Elderfield, who wrote the preeminent monograph on Frankenthaler in conjunction with the artist, explains that Frankenthaler benefitted from her relationship with Greenberg. Even without publically supporting her work, nevertheless, he provided critical access and

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Wallach, “Arts and Craftiness,” 25.

¹⁵³ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 13.

¹⁵⁴ I discuss these issues in more detail in chapter eight.

feedback.¹⁵⁵ Elderfield argues, “He did provide for Frankenthaler the important benefits of his critical judgment, talking with her about the progress of her work, and just as significantly, comparing notes and opinions on art of virtually every persuasion.”¹⁵⁶ Further, Elderfield explains that Greenberg introduced Frankenthaler to influential contemporary artists, with whom she became friends, including Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, David Smith, Franz Kline, and Adolph Gottlieb.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, through the critic she met other critics and dealers. Elderfield asserts, “One could hardly imagine a more opportune introduction to the New York School.”¹⁵⁸

Frankenthaler used the influence of teachers and models, and inspiration and guidance instilled in her from an early age, to create a highly personalized idiom. In her early career, Frankenthaler worked in a synthetic cubist idiom, painting still form. She was influenced by a host of artists, including Picasso, Braque, Leger, Mondrian, Matisse, John Marin, and Kandinsky.¹⁵⁹ Art critic and historian, Barbara Rose, notes that Frankenthaler commenced her artistic development by incorporating a range of influences, including Arshile Gorky and Joan Miró, and to a certain extent, Paul Klee.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 26.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁰ Barbara Rose, “Painting within the Tradition: The Career of Helen Frankenthaler,” *Artforum* (April 1969): 28.

Mountains and Sea and the Use of Soak-Stain

In 1950, Frankenthaler's work was distinct from New York School artists, as she was in the process of rethinking her compositions and at Greenberg's suggestion, went to study with Hans Hofmann at his summer school in Provincetown, Massachusetts, for three weeks. Of particular note, it was Hofmann's "priority"¹⁶¹ for color that was new to Frankenthaler. Unlike Hofmann, however, Frankenthaler was more interested in the "drawing of color than in color alone."¹⁶² Nevertheless, this mentor influenced her, and Frankenthaler's recognition of the importance of color commenced. After completing her studies with Hofmann, she began exploring Fauvist and abstract Surrealist tendencies in her work and heightened her use of color, using a varied palette.¹⁶³ A comparison of *Abstract Landscape* of 1951 to *Mountains and Sea* of 1952 reveals her use of both bright, intense, fully saturated colors and pastels and lighter tonalities (figures 1 and 2). The Surrealist interests are evident in paintings like *Mountains and Sea* as well, where the very technique does not support strictly organized outcomes. While Frankenthaler may have planned color schemes and general shapes and patterns for the composition, since she poured paint onto the canvas, she could not easily maintain precision. The Surrealist element of chance is clear in *Abstract Landscape*, where Frankenthaler worked from shape to shape, and allowed the picture to determine the next step in the process of completion. As she developed her idiom and familiarized herself with many new influences, the artist

¹⁶¹ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 26.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

disrupted the Cubist mold she had utilized up to this point, combining it with her interest in the “drawing of color,”¹⁶⁴ where the application of paint looks drawn rather than poured, dripped, or brushed. The surface of the canvas appears filled with crayon-like charcoal applications rather than paint-brushed strokes.

Frankenthaler’s breakthrough moment occurred in 1951, when she viewed Jackson Pollock’s “drip” paintings at Betty Parsons Gallery. She attended the show with Clement Greenberg, and recalled that Pollock’s work was “beautiful, and it was new, and it was saying the most that could be said in painting up to that point – and it really drew me in. I was in awe of it, and I wanted to get at why.”¹⁶⁵ Also describing this pivotal moment in Frankenthaler’s artistic development, Rose asserts, “her coming of age as a painter occurred abruptly, when, as a twenty-two year old Bennington graduate, she encountered the work of Jackson Pollock . . . by the time she was twenty-four . . . she had understood the most radical aspect of Pollock’s art was not his highly personal image, but his *technique*, which could be extended in a direction other than Pollock’s own.”¹⁶⁶

Frankenthaler’s challenge was to expand upon Pollock’s work without imitating him. His decision to do away with the paintbrush, choosing instead to pour paint directly onto the canvas, intrigued her.¹⁶⁷ Frankenthaler proclaimed, “I had no desire to copy Pollock. I didn’t want to take a stick and dip it in a can of enamel . . . I needed something more liquid, watery, thinner. All my life, I have been drawn to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” 62.

¹⁶⁶ Rose, “Painting within the Tradition,” 28.

¹⁶⁷ Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” 62.

water and translucency . . . One of my favorite childhood games was to fill a sink with water and put nail polish into it to see what happened when the colors burst up the surface, merging into each other as floating, changing shapes.”¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, this inspiration helped her to develop a basic framework from which she could explore artistic possibilities.

Frankenthaler experimented with new techniques throughout the early 1950s, developing her solution to working without a brush in the form of soak-stain painting. She diluted oil paint and applied it to raw canvas, thereby allowing the paint to blend into the canvas. Although she developed this approach over time and utilized this method when creating her 1951 paintings, critics often pinpoint the moment she created her 1952 painting *Mountains and Sea*, as a sudden breakthrough for the artist. For example, Deborah Solomon writes,

One morning in 1952, after returning from a vacation in Nova Scotia, Frankenthaler arrived at her studio . . . and unrolled a large sheet of canvas on the floor. Then she thinned down some oil paint to a watery consistency and began pouring it onto the canvas . . . As she worked, Frankenthaler was aware that this image evolving on her canvas bore a certain resemblance to a group of watercolors she had painted from nature during her visit to Nova Scotia . . . but she also knew that it marked a departure from anything she had ever done before.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Barbara Hess, *Abstract Expressionism* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2006), 80.

¹⁶⁹ Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” 66.

Indeed, nature and landscape seem to have been the inspiration for the creation of this painting. In fact, Elderfield proclaims, “*Mountains and Sea* is exceptional . . . in that it clearly derives from landscape. ‘In 1952,’ the artist tells us, ‘on a trip to Nova Scotia I did landscapes with folding easel equipment. I came back and did the *Mountains and Sea* painting and I knew the landscapes were in my arms as I did it.’ ‘In my arms,’ I take it, is not a casual figure of speech: deriving not only from landscape but from the experience of painting landscape, the picture releases stored knowledge and memories of that experience in its physical creation.” Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 66.

Solomon argues that central to the work's appeal is its "dazzling sense of color and light"¹⁷⁰ and Frankenthaler's victory in this painting "was to elevate the casual radiance of watercolor . . . to the heroic scale of Abstract Expressionism."¹⁷¹

Frankenthaler painted *Mountains and Sea* on October 26, 1952, upon her return from a trip to Nova Scotia. The composition looks slightly out of focus, as though a sheer veil separates the viewer from the canvas. This painting is composed of an overall muted palette, including faded green, rusty orange and yellow, a brushed, soft pinkish-red, and variations of light to medium sky blue. In the center, the pinkish boxes lead to the upper left reddish-pink square and circle, and on the right to a rusted yellow walnut-like shape, which in turn leads to a section of faded green loose triangles and slug-like shapes. The canvas is filled with nonfigurative shapes that are arranged like flowers in a vase, where the focal point is the central pinkish-red horizontal, rectangular boxes from which the longer, billowing strokes vertically sprout in every direction. Although the composition is centrally dense, the outer corners contain little to no activity.

This painting represents the earliest culmination of her innovation. In fact, it was just before she painted it that Frankenthaler began using unsized and unprimed cotton duck stapled to the floor, which allowed for movement around all four sides of the canvas and enabled paint to soak more fully into the canvas.¹⁷² It was in

¹⁷⁰ Solomon, "Artful Survivor," 66.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 65.

Mountains and Sea that Frankenthaler primarily used the soak-stain technique.¹⁷³

B.H. Friedman writes, “What she did was to develop a total image, an art vocabulary, with the staining technique.”¹⁷⁴ And Frankenthaler noted, “In *Mountains and Sea* I put in the charcoal gestures first, because I wanted to *draw* in with color and shape the totally abstract memory of the landscape. I spilled on the drawing in paint from the coffee cans. The charcoal lines were original guideposts that eventually became unnecessary.”¹⁷⁵ She explained, “Clem [Clement Greenberg] encouraged me to go ahead and make more. I did. In all kinds of combinations and possibilities; I couldn’t try them out fast enough.”¹⁷⁶ Here she incorporated the increased interest in drawing that she developed while studying under Hofmann with a fascination in color, deviating from the popular use of black-and-white to employ a muted but colorful palette. Because of her technique, Frankenthaler created a composition made up of drawn pigments that literally fused and became one with the canvas. Additionally, scale varies throughout the composition, but is not organized to imply closeness or distance. As a result, the painting displays no specific foreground or background. Rather, the work is separated into sections or bands, placed one on top of another. The painting is thus self-referential as a created surface.

¹⁷³ Jackson Pollock employed a stain technique prior to Frankenthaler. Elderfield explains, “Those classic Pollocks had often been begun . . . with a stained substructure. It was probably from this source that one of Frankenthaler’s friends, James Brooks, began to make a kind of stained picture with which she was certainly familiar.” *Ibid.*, 75. Elderfield thus notes, “Frankenthaler deserves credit not for ‘inventing’ the stain technique but alone for seeing how it could be used not in imitation of some other technique but for the capabilities it uniquely allowed. This was her invention: to elevate to the production of important art a technique whose possibilities had hitherto been only dimly grasped.” *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁷⁴ B.H. Friedman, “Towards the Total Color Image,” *Art News* 65, no. 4 (Summer 1966): 32.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 66.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Elderfield writes in his article “Specific Incidents” that Frankenthaler “transformed the graphic black-and-white style to produce paintings in which figure-ground relationships are softened by pale and absorbed color, and in which an effect of Impressionist alloverness is created despite the breaks in alloverness provided by imagery.”¹⁷⁷ Elderfield may be referring to the connections that art historians have made between *Mountains and Sea* and an outside scene. The painting has been likened to an abstracted nature scene on a hazy day.

Upon viewing *Mountains and Sea*, Greenberg proclaimed, “I thought it was a damned good picture.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the painting illustrated Greenberg’s proclamations about art— that a work of art should be as self-reflexive as possible, underscoring the materiality of painting and the flatness of the canvas. As Frankenthaler applied diluted paints to an unprimed canvas, the paint and canvas were one, reflecting the canvas as a material itself. This application of paint simultaneously denied depth, both literally (as there is no paint raised from the surface of the canvas), and figuratively (as there are no perspectival tricks incorporated to create the illusion of depth), thus underscoring its flatness. Evidence of Greenberg’s approval of *Mountains and Sea* is the fact that he personally escorted up-and-coming artists to view the painting. In May of 1953, Greenberg brought Washington, DC, artists Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis to Frankenthaler’s studio when she was away for the weekend to see the painting. He encouraged these male artists to further elaborate on her technique.

¹⁷⁷ John Elderfield, “Specific Incidents,” *Art in America* 70 (February 1982): 105.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” 66.

The overshadowing effect of *Mountains and Sea* on Frankenthaler's early 1950s paintings is significant, as its early canonical success has come to represent her initial output in full. The reason *Mountains and Sea* defines Frankenthaler's early career is twofold. First, Clement Greenberg declared that the work could stand as the impetus for great technical artistic strides. Secondly, and directly correlated to Greenberg's influence, critics and scholars positioned the painting historically as a raw but useful link. As a result, its importance lies in what it inspired, rather than in its own demonstration of the artist's knowledge and skill. The painting has served to singly define the contributions, innovations, and accomplishments Frankenthaler made in the 1950s. E.C. Goossen writes of this dilemma. He argues that *Mountains and Sea* altered her critical reception, noting that Frankenthaler "has contributed to a variety of attitudes which have broken faith with the tradition of easel painting, even from her position within the tradition."¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, he acknowledges, "the recent history of American painting would have been notably different without her presence, and . . . the absence of her work would deprive us of any number of major paintings upon which the premises of contemporary art rely."¹⁸⁰ Once critics and scholars declared *Mountains and Sea* to be of emergent significance, it became her main work of critical interest, an issue addressed in chapter eight.

Mountains and Sea represents one of many ways that Frankenthaler conveyed her fascination with the materiality of painting—flattened surfaces, an interplay of various scales that allowed for no foreground or background but rather highlighted

¹⁷⁹ E.C. Goossen, *Helen Frankenthaler*, exh cat. (New York: Rapoport Printing Corporation, 1969), 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the painted-on surface, and a brushed, drawing-like application of paint—in her work. She expressed both open and closed forms, dense and simplified compositions in multiple ways throughout her paintings of the early 1950s.¹⁸¹

Garden Maze (1952) and *10/29/52* (1952), made just a few days after *Mountains and Sea*, represent Frankenthaler's early interest in muted, faded color stained into the canvas, an all-over composition, color drawing, and the relationship of one shape to the next (figures 3 and 4). *Garden Maze* is a painting composed of rusty orange, fiery yellow, reddish-orange, dull brownish-green, and faded purplish-pinkish blues. In a similar manner to *Mountains and Sea*, the painting is slightly out-of-focus; and she created a muffled, hazy effect by the loose, all-over application of paint. Frankenthaler filled the picture either with round, spiraling, feathered outlined shapes, or with paint applied directly to the canvas in a loose, sketchy manner; together, these techniques resulted in a brushed, smoky, charcoal-like effect. The shapes in *Garden Maze* are flat and vary in scale, so that there is no distinction between foreground and background. As a result, the artist emphasizes the flatness of the canvas.

10/29/52, like *Garden Maze*, incorporates the gestured, drawn line with a loose application of broad, soaked areas of paint. As with *Mountains and Sea*, *10/29/52* includes a central void, but it is from this empty space that the action of the composition radiates: beams of drawn color plunge out at various points around the picture. She used brown paint to create the outlines of the swirling spirals that appear

¹⁸¹ Carl Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950's*, exh cat. (Waltham, Massachusetts: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1981), 14.

most intensely in the middle, left portion of the canvas. The rest of the canvas is filled with a pasty, dull pink, sky blue, yoke-like yellow, faded green, and slight tinges of bright, intense red paint. Again, as with *Garden Maze*, the canvas is covered with paint and the shapes are flat, directing the viewer's attention to the picture as the creation of the artist, and not a window into another world.

These pictures exhibit Frankenthaler's interest in an all-over composition filled with an intermingling of great detail and areas of little action. They also display her adept ability to handle paint. Where she combined multiple ways of applying paint to a single canvas, she created sfumato and atmospheric impressions composed of painterly brushstrokes and poured, brushed-on surfaces. Frankenthaler used a diverse array of color. The works are self-referential as two-dimensional pictures and expand from the center of the composition outwards or the outer edges of the canvas inwards.

Mountains and Sea and *Garden Maze* were exhibited in January-February of 1953 at Frankenthaler's second show, held at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. Critics reviewed the show negatively, and nothing was sold.¹⁸² Thus, initially, critics and collectors rejected work that was later recognized to have significantly affected the direction of mid-century American art. While later scholars lauded *Mountains and Sea*, primarily for the role it served in inspiring Noland and Louis to develop Color-Field painting, critics of the time almost entirely overlooked the painting upon its initial exhibition. Eventual critical attention on Frankenthaler focused almost exclusively on this single work, mostly ignoring other paintings from the same

¹⁸² Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 80.

period. In the shadow of *Mountains and Sea*, Frankenthaler's other 1950s paintings were disregarded or dismissed. Critics thereby primarily appreciated Frankenthaler as a catalyst for others, including male artists of the Color Field School.

Her 1953 painting, *Shatter*, is an often-overlooked example of the artist's early interest in the soak-stain painting technique; it is a large-scale creation utilizing the technique (figure 5). *Shatter* seems to be the culmination of Frankenthaler's interest in contradictory tendencies, such as balance and chaos, intensity and dullness, open and closed forms, and a drawn and painted surface, fused into one concise and cohesive whole. The painting assembles opposites, including crisp, egg-yolk yellows combined with dull, muted pinks, sky blue, and faded green, a centered composition within which the forms float and pulsate, and poured paint combines with drawn lines.

The artist integrated portions of the canvas without paint, so that the raw surface intermingles with the painted surface. The nonfigurative composition consists mostly of round, amoeba-like shapes, stacked on top of each other in four vertical and horizontal rows in the center of the canvas. These components radiate out of the center of the composition, close to the edges of the canvas, while maintaining their grid-like positions. The composition is open and airy. Additionally, the interaction of central, painted shapes and raw areas of canvas, combine to create a tactile quality to the work. Elderfield writes "The intrinsic material unity and abstractness of *Shatter* reveal its lineage in Pollock's allover pictures. So does its composition, which . . . was probably worked on from all four sides of the canvas . . . so that it hangs suspended within its frame. But unlike

Pollock it does not fill the frame. The ‘image’ is held in place within the geometry of its support by ‘discovering the center.’”¹⁸³ As a result, Elderfield explains, it “gives the impression of symmetrically unfolding from it.”¹⁸⁴ Indeed every inch of this composition, whether painted or not, plays a role in the painting. To this end, it was essential for Frankenthaler to create a dialogue on the surface of the canvas between raw and painted canvas, and the contained, grid-like, closed outline and looser, open forms; every area of the canvas satisfies a visual need.

Shatter thoroughly illustrates Frankenthaler’s stain technique, which may be best identified in the painted variations that interact with the bare canvas. The surface of the canvas appears to be simultaneously filled with floating and absorbed areas of color.¹⁸⁵ She created movement—particularly prevalent in the upper left absorbed rusty red paint placed just next to an unpainted area. This dynamism fuses line, drawing, and color. In response to an interviewer, Frankenthaler claimed, “I think that for me any picture that works, even if it is in the guise of pure application, if it works, involves drawing.”¹⁸⁶ In *Shatter*, the outer edges of the shapes simultaneously appear drawn and brushed as a result of the loose application of paint.

The constant interaction between areas with color and those without, bands with detail and ones with voids, visually illustrates Frankenthaler’s interests; the play on depth that she describes seems to form the foundation on which this painting is based. In Frankenthaler’s own words, “I have always been concerned with space in a

¹⁸³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. Elderfield here recalls Frankenthaler’s response to an interviewer.

picture. I say over and over again, ‘Every picture is a flat surface with four corners.’ But that simple remark is a ‘lie,’ because, for me, when any picture really works, it is a play of depth. Everything that gives that magic play has to do with the surface being drawn and colored in perfect order.”¹⁸⁷

The Period of 1955-1960

Not only did Frankenthaler experience significant changes in her personal life in the years between 1955 and 1960, but she also altered the look of her artistic output. The proliferation of paintings such as *Nude* (1958) and *Winter Figure with Black Overhead* (1959), reveals the emergence of her evolving style (figures 6 and 7). In general, these works exhibit Frankenthaler’s replacing of rust and pale blues with highly saturated paints, and her tendency towards dense compositions.¹⁸⁸ Curator Susan Cross explains, “In the mid-1950s, she appears to have been affected by prevailing tastes for heavily worked canvases.”¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, in these pictures, like those that precede and follow, the artist continued to explore the soak-stain technique. Cross proclaims, “Throughout the decade, Frankenthaler continued to investigate the possibilities of her soak-stain technique with increasing variety, combining placid flows of color with energized bursts of paint applied with motions of the wrist.”¹⁹⁰ However, critics and scholars often overlook these paintings, advancing from the mid 1950s to the early 1960s in their focus. Noting this omission,

¹⁸⁷ Amei Wallach, “Living Color,” *Newsday* 2, June 5, 1989, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Barbara Rose, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1970), 88.

¹⁸⁹ Susan Cross, “The Emergence of a Painter,” in *After Mountains and Sea: Frankenthaler 1956-1959*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1998), 23.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

William Berkson proclaims that critics have not recognized Frankenthaler's contributions [here referring to late 1950s paintings *Eden* (1957), *Jacob's Ladder* (1957), and *Toward a New Climate* (1957)]. He writes, "all three are masterpieces of their kinds that have received wide neglect."¹⁹¹

Nude is a painting representative of Frankenthaler's early stylistic transition. It utilizes mid-range paint color, including rusty reddish-orange, deep brown, and dull turquoise, in addition to many areas of raw canvas. These colors appear drawn rather than painted, where the paint is applied thinly and sparsely throughout the central portion of the canvas, and thicker on the outside perimeters of the composition. The rusty reddish-orange comprises the strict horizontal stripe across the lower part of the canvas that marginally converges with the central diagonal turquoise shape. The outer areas of thick, bold rusty reddish-orange and dull turquoise paint serve as stabilizing elements by cupping the inner composition and holding the composition in place. This picture represents Frankenthaler's transition from a loose application of paint and relationship of shapes to a more stable, simplified composition composed of fewer colors and marks.

Winter Figure with Black Overhead, too, indicates Frankenthaler's shift to a more compact, streamlined composition. The stabilizing elements here are the two thick stacked black boxes at the top of the canvas, the central turquoise loose "M"-like shape, and the green backwards "L" shape on the lower right portion of the canvas. These forms balance the composition, creating a more contained and compact picture than *Nude*. Frankenthaler nevertheless maintained a sense of airiness

¹⁹¹ William Berkson, "Poet of the Surface," *Arts Magazine* 39, no. 9 (May/June, 1965): 50.

in the center of the canvas, as well as around the composition's edges, by keeping these areas paint-free, thereby reiterating her interest in creating a visual dialogue between raw and painted canvas. Her application of paint is still loose, but her palette is brighter in this painting than in *Nude*, where the rusty brown, blues, and reddish-oranges have given way to more saturated, heightened, crisp orange, bright sky blue, deep brownish-green, and black. Of this particular work, and others created around the same time, Elderfield writes that "those of 1959—such as *Two Lives as One on a Crocodile*, *Five*, and *Winter Figure with Black Overhead*—do evidence a cooling and condensation in their imagery, a new sense of generalization and detachment from specific depiction, and a greater tangibility in their drawing. And these attributes increased in importance."¹⁹²

Frankenthaler's 1950s work reflects her originality of vision. In fact, Elderfield later declared, "Had Frankenthaler stopped painting at the end of 1959, her reputation would already have already been secured."¹⁹³ However, her reputation was centered on her role as a catalyst, and may have been secured only in so far as it was directly linked to the creation of a single, model work. Belz, in contrast, explains, "Objective, hard, tough . . . these terms resonate through the art magazines of the 1960's."¹⁹⁴ As a result, he asserts, "the heroic, all-or-nothing gesturalism of Abstract Expressionism had been eclipsed by the cool paint handling and formal lucidity of what Greenberg called Post-Painterly Abstraction and others . . . referred

¹⁹² Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 141.

¹⁹³ Elderfield, "Specific Incidents," 106.

¹⁹⁴ Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950's*, 12.

to as color-field painting. Related to both camps but defined by neither, Frankenthaler's achievement in the 1950's became . . . a cultural elision."¹⁹⁵ Belz recognized critics' general omission of Frankenthaler from the period's dominant art historical canon and critical discussion. A contributing factor to her exclusion, Belz thus argues, was the artist's role as a Second Generation Abstract Expressionist, in which her work related to Abstract Expressionism in some ways, and to Color Field painting in others.¹⁹⁶

In addition to her artistic development, this period was also significant for Frankenthaler personally. In the years following Frankenthaler's 1955 breakup with Greenberg, she became romantically involved with artist Robert Motherwell, whom

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Frankenthaler's position as a Second Generation Abstract Expressionist may have therefore contributed to her marginalization from mid-century arts movements. This Second Generation "effect," as opposed to the sexual, may have excluded her. Critics often considered many artists who developed their styles and output during the start of the 1950s to be followers of Abstract Expressionism and/or precursors of the movements of the next decade. As a result, critics and scholars frequently regarded Second Generation Abstract Expressionists as redundant in nature to the former movement or as assisting in forming a foundation from which the next arts style could launch.

Complicating the matter, Joan Mitchell's reception as a Second Generation Abstract Expressionist is marked by much critical and market place success. Critics often constructed her as a tough, foul-mouthed artist who consumed alcohol and spoke bluntly. See, for example, Judith Bernstock, *Joan Mitchell* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1988); John Russell, "Joan Mitchell, Abstract Artist, Is Dead at 66," *New York Times*, October 31, 1992; Michael Kimmelman, "Joan Mitchell," *New York Times*, April 9, 1993; Klaus Kertess, *Joan Mitchell* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997); Jane Livingston, et. al., *The Paintings of Joan Mitchell* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Patricia Albers, *Joan Mitchell: Lady Painter* (New York: Knopf, 2011).

Additionally, however, it is necessary to recognize Frankenthaler's marginalization in the context of the period's larger socio-cultural setting. Because of society's expectation of women's roles at midcentury, Frankenthaler's career represented an unpopular path. Critics' willingness to relegate Frankenthaler to the periphery of the art world in spite of her early artistic achievements demonstrates the effect of cultural expectations with regard to gender roles. Lisa Saltzman notes, "the gendered language of emergent formalist criticism would seem to echo in its response to the radically dispersed, diffuse, all-over surfaces of New York School painting something of a broader societal anxiety about the dissolution of gender boundaries in postwar America." Lisa Saltzman, "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, eds., Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 374.

she married in 1958. Motherwell was a once-aspiring philosopher, established artist, leader and theoretician of Abstract Expressionism with a keen ability to articulate key concepts of contemporary art (Abstract Expressionism, specifically). The two traveled extensively together, and maintained studios in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and New York. Their marriage, however, ended in divorce, in 1971.

The Period of 1960-1965

Though her reputation was established in the 1950s, it was her inclusion in several major exhibitions of the early 1960s that decidedly positioned Frankenthaler as an important artist. In 1960, she had her first solo museum exhibition at The Jewish Museum in New York, an achievement signaling the acme of her early career. During the 1960s, this important institution was involved in establishing modern art movements, and as such, Frankenthaler's exhibition at this museum was a pivotal accomplishment.¹⁹⁷ Her work was also included in the 1964 exhibition *Post-Painterly Abstraction* (at the Los Angeles County Museum), curated by Clement Greenberg, which cemented her position in the art world. This exhibition showed a new expression of nonfigurative painting, later known as Color Field. Her work was thereby chosen by a defining critic of the period for display next to other considerable artists, such as Thomas Downing, Sam Francis, Ellsworth Kelly, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella, thereby marking Frankenthaler's important position in the mid-century art world. In the following years, she received international recognition in the contemporary art world, such as the inclusion of her

¹⁹⁷ See Judith F. Stauber, "Jewish Landscapes Rooted, Embedded, Enshrined, and Transcendent: Metaphor as Communicated in Jewish Museums in New York, Jerusalem, and San Francisco" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2010), ProQuest (AAT 3440188).

work at the Venice Biennale in 1966. The role of these exhibitions was thus decisive for creating Frankenthaler's influential reputation.¹⁹⁸

The early 1960s also proved to be another substantial turning point in Frankenthaler's evolving artistic style. She started the period creating works such as *Yellow Caterpillar* (figure 8). Unlike her prior paintings, *Yellow Caterpillar* is composed of just a few critical marks on the canvas, created through four bright, intense colors. Here Frankenthaler employs egg-yoke yellow, deep reddish-orange, midnight bluish-purple, and blackish-brown, and raw areas of canvas. Its composition is centered and held in place in part by four lines forming a box; she creates the centralizing, stabilizing effect by employment of the long thin lines across the middle to upper bands of the canvas that twist and turn to form a contained, compact, simplified composition. The yellow curve that runs horizontally across the upper section of the canvas and dominates the composition is balanced by the combination of the three-part blue middle horizontal line that is broken up by the two brown ameba-like forms placed in the middle and right center band, and the centered orange ladder-like vertical shape that runs down into the lower band from the middle section of the canvas. The outer, unpainted edges and corners of the picture frame the internal composition by holding the imagery in place.

Another important painting of the period, *Small's Paradise* (1964), is indicative of her formal interests during this time (figure 9). Here, she saturated the

¹⁹⁸ Also in the 1960s, Frankenthaler began printmaking, a medium for which she developed exceptional skill. Always interested in artistic experimentation, the artist explored a variety of art forms, including ceramics, sculpture, tapestry design, and earthenware plates. As she broadened her artistic horizons, she collaborated with a variety of artists. For example, she created earthenware plates in Vermont with artist David Smith in the 1960s, and in 1972, welded steel sculptures with artist Anthony Caro.

canvas with blocks of green, pink, orange, and blue paint, creating a balanced composition. She stabilized this relatively symmetrical painting by incorporating a central orange vertical shape that intersects with the blue horizontal band. Contrasting with these fixed forms, Frankenthaler maintained loose edges, thereby further balancing the painting's qualities.

With the creation of her early 1960s works, Frankenthaler proved herself to be an artist capable of integrating new ideas into her established outlook. Writing in the Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition catalogue of 1969, a publication reaching exhibition visitors and beyond and therefore serving as an powerful voice on Frankenthaler, E.C. Goossen explains, “unlike the masters of abstract expressionism, her immediate forbearers, or the ‘action’ painters with whom for a time she was associated, Frankenthaler has shown herself a rarity in her capacity not only to develop, but, moreover, to develop without leaping from rock to rock.”¹⁹⁹ And Elderfield notes, “she did not simply move from one source to the next, but conflated them as her work developed.”²⁰⁰ She never abandoned one style in full to move to the next. Frankenthaler integrated various elements into her artistic outlook to develop different approaches that maintained a basic foundation. This tendency is evident in her subsequent works, including, for example, *Nadir Rising* (1974), which represents another shift in her style (figure 10). This work also later proved to be successful on the auction block (see Appendix 1). The painting reflects Frankenthaler's concern with hazy, simplified, and all-over, painterly compositions.

¹⁹⁹ Goossen, *Helen Frankenthaler*, 8.

²⁰⁰ Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 34.

She filled this atmospheric painting with gray-blue, cloud white, and smoky, rusty orange paints, the latter of which serve as the work's stabilizing force. A rose colored rectangle hangs in the upper right quadrant of the painting. The loosely applied paints fill the canvas, with shapes whose edges appear to pulsate across the surface. *Nadir Rising* illustrates Frankenthaler's utilization of new abstract concepts and concerns, which she renewed throughout the first several decades of her career; they represent key shifts in her idiom.

Frankenthaler, like Norman Lewis, Alma Thomas, and Mark Tobey, taught art. In fact, she was invited to teach at various universities throughout her career, including at New York University in 1958; Yale University in 1962; Princeton University and Hunter College in New York in 1970; her alma mater, Bennington College, in 1972; and Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania in 1974, to name a few. Additionally, she received international recognition and honorary degrees, recognized recently with the National Medal of Arts in 2001 and the Skowhegan Medal for Painting in 2003.

The artist lived in Darien, Connecticut, with her husband of 17 years, Stephen M. DuBrul, Jr., where she maintained her studio until her death on December 27, 2011.

Auction Performance of a Powerful Female Artist

An integral component to Frankenthaler's biography is the history of the sales of her paintings. In fact, the art market reveals how the social forces in Frankenthaler's life (and the other artists examined herein) impacted her career.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ The art market is, in fact, an inefficient market, based on buyers' and sellers' perception of the

As a result, the biography of the artist becomes one of the most important factors in market performance, because it influences art world entities and helps frame their construction of the artist. Frankenthaler's art market performance, measured through auction sales, as this data is consistently and regularly recorded and accessible in comparison to gallery and private sales, illustrates how biography affected the reception of this nonfigurative artist. The art market is thus central because it enhances and clarifies the picture of Frankenthaler's art production and reception by showing how the market reacted to her various styles and paintings, made available to the public through the lens of her biography. This facet of her professional life illustrates the connectedness of the various segments of the art world by exhibiting how the market has been influenced by other factors of her reception.²⁰²

Helen Frankenthaler has had 320 works placed on the auction block, 84% of which have sold, since the early 1980s. Her highest auction price was achieved in May of 2008, with a sale price of \$769,000.²⁰³ Richard Polsky, art dealer and author of the *Art Market Guide*, a source that rates contemporary artists on the basis of

quality of an artist's work (be that quality beauty, uniqueness, or skill). Furthermore, there are a variety of influences on the art market, such as social forces, artist biography, the mood of buyers and sellers, supply and demand, and the opinions of the other players in the art market (including critics, academics, and gallery owners). These entities decide which artists are recognized and in what light, as well as how these artists compare to current and past artists.

²⁰² The methodology that auction houses employ for object gathering may inadvertently integrate the positive and negative critical reception. When an individual begins the process of selling a painting at auction, they procure an auction estimate from an auction house official. The opinion of the person providing that estimate, often with a background in art history or the arts in general, is likely to be influenced by critical reviews, thus impacting both the supply of and demand for Frankenthaler's paintings. As such, the critiques of Frankenthaler and her paintings could affect which paintings are placed on the auction block.

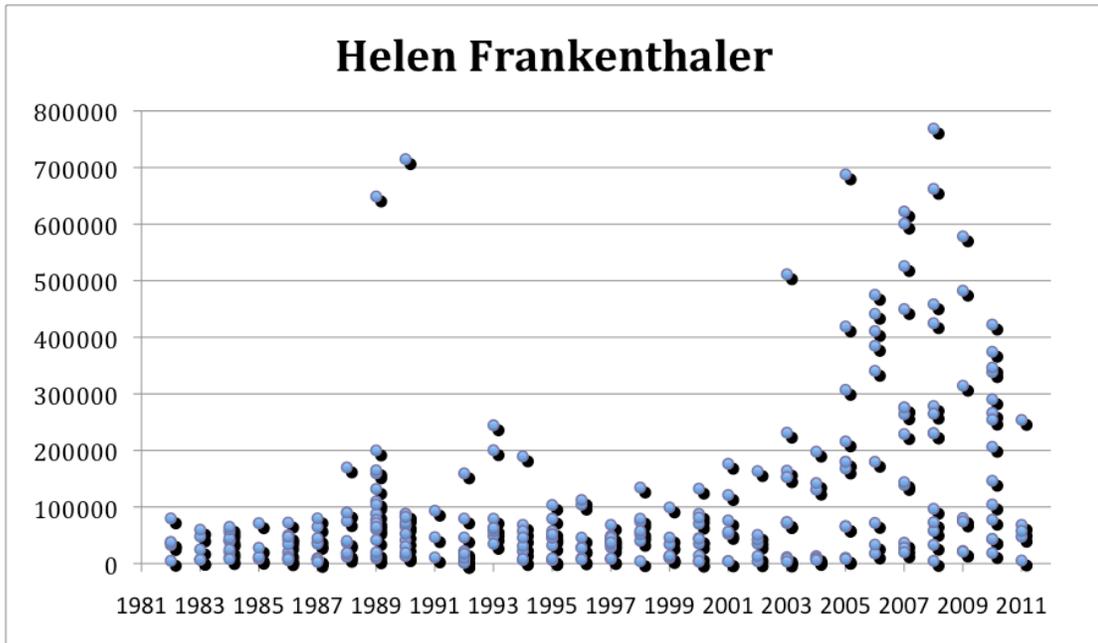
²⁰³ See "Auction Records for Helen Frankenthaler," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORD&artist=30037.

‘buy,’ ‘sell,’ or ‘hold,’ and in which the ratings are primarily based on art sales at Christie’s and Sotheby’s, commented on Frankenthaler in the 1997 *Art Market Guide*. He wrote, “If you are a fan of the work [by Frankenthaler] and if market considerations are important to you, your best bet is to go for overall composition and color rather than buying the best period (pre-1970). The period should matter, but it doesn’t seem to. The market generally prefers the later work. Paintings with little white space, bright, evocative color, poetic marks, and reasonable scale should do well in the future.”²⁰⁴ These observations connect to Frankenthaler’s early critical reception (analyzed in detail in chapter eight). In general, critics overtly dismissed her initial output of the 1950s, with the tone of their criticism becoming subtler throughout subsequent years.

Works by Frankenthaler do not sell as often as Mark Tobey’s,²⁰⁵ perhaps suggesting that such a discrepancy belies the fact that she did not produce as prolifically as Tobey. Her auction sales however, are monetarily higher than Tobey’s, most likely because of her early access to critics. Frankenthaler was one of the first female, Second Generation Abstract Expressionist artists to gain access to critics and galleries.

²⁰⁴ Richard Polsky, *Art Market Guide 1997, Contemporary American Art* (San Francisco: The Marlit Press, 1997), 72.

²⁰⁵ Tobey has had 982 works come up on the auction block to date (see Tobey, auction performance, Chapter six).



The values of Frankenthaler's paintings have increased throughout the decades, although they seem to correlate with economic cycles. The graph above reveals that her sales started to accelerate throughout the 1990s. This increase in volume could be the result of her works becoming more popular and as a result, auction houses pursuing her sales more readily. The auction data also reveals that Frankenthaler's primary auction market is centered in New York, with the leading auction houses of Christie's and Sotheby's vying for her work.

Chapter 4: Norman Lewis: The Wandering Artist, Held Back

Life Overview

Norman Wilfred Lewis was born in Harlem, New York, on July 23, 1909. His parents were immigrants from Bermuda who worked in labor-intensive jobs to provide for their three sons. Lewis's father Wilfred Lewis, worked on the docks in Brooklyn as a foreman, and his mother, Diana Lewis, was a baker, seamstress, and housekeeper. The family lived on Lenox Avenue near West 132nd Street, and later on West 143rd Street in a predominantly white neighborhood. This racial make-up impacted the artist's outlook as a young boy. He explained, "The whole neighborhood was white at that time. I think the only Negroes who lived up in that area were superintendents."²⁰⁶

His parents were not involved in the arts, and although Lewis knew from an early age that he wanted to become a painter, his father disapproved, deeming the vocation "a white man's profession . . . a starving profession."²⁰⁷ Ironically, Lewis's brother was also artistic, and their parents encouraged him to pursue his passion for the violin. Commenting on this discrepancy, the artist recollected, "He [Wilfred Lewis] never encouraged me, but musically they forced my brother's becoming a violinist and he was good. And yet visually they couldn't understand my desire to be

²⁰⁶ Norman Lewis, "Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis," interview by Henri Ghent, July 20, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lewis68.htm>.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

a painter . . . which I pursued on my own.”²⁰⁸ In fact, throughout his childhood, the artist painted alone, and did not tell anyone. Lewis’s physical and emotional environment thus discouraged his artistic pursuits. He explained, “when I finally started to paint on my own I never told anyone. And the majority of my friends eventually became white kids who I knew were painting and I could share; there was a give and take that I nourished because this was what I wanted to do. But I didn’t know any black kids who painted or read or wrote poetry.”²⁰⁹ He loved to draw, and he graduated from the New York Vocational High School having studied drawing and commercial design.²¹⁰ However, the combination of his father’s ever-present disapproving attitude, and his lack of instruction and opportunity, left Lewis with little direction.²¹¹ Journalist Harry Henderson explains, “Trying to copy illustrators like Norman Rockwell and others, he became discouraged; he did not know that they worked on a large scale which made detailed renderings and highlights easy.”²¹² Further, the artist noted, “I couldn’t fathom how this was done . . . I wanted to paint and I didn’t know any painters.”²¹³

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ “Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 118.

²¹¹ Harry Henderson, “Norman Lewis: The Making of a Black Abstract Expressionist, His Achievements and His Neglect,” *The International Review of African American Art* 13, no. 3 (1996): 59.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 59.

The Early Years: Developing a Unique Style

Lewis spent much time during the 1920s and 1930s gambling and in poolrooms. He became a skilled poker player, bet on horses, and used the winnings to purchase books on artists and art subjects as diverse as Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, El Greco, Pablo Picasso, Persian prints, Marc Chagall, painters of the French Revolution, Paul Klee, African art, and Cubism. In fact, these books comprised the sum total of his early art education.²¹⁴ Henderson notes, “What he learned was that each significant artist made a distinct, identifiable contribution”²¹⁵ and, according to the artist, “There’s something more than just painting the figure representatively. Just looking at these books I bought – people like Cezanne.”²¹⁶ The artist went on, in jest, “When I first started painting I would say, ‘Nor-Man’ like Van Gogh, as if some of it could rub off on me.”²¹⁷ He even signed some early paintings “Nor-Man.”²¹⁸ This attempt to emulate a successful artist through his name’s intonation illustrates Lewis’s investment in establishing himself in the art world. Ironically, in this sense, he mimicked an artist who like him, could not support himself through his art, and was only posthumously recognized.

Several key events mark the official commencement of Lewis’s art training. He enrolled at Columbia University and the John Reed Club Art School between 1933 and 1935. This affiliation was highly significant, as Lewis chose to associate

²¹⁴ Ibid., 59-60.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 59.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 60.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

with a Communist club during the mid-1930s. His art during this period was marked by Social Realist tendencies, in which he focused on the struggles and challenges facing African Americans in American society. While he incorporated his interest in modernist idioms into these paintings, nevertheless, his output during this time was representational. Throughout this decade, he increasingly worked in nonfigurative form, until the mid-1940's, when this format comprised his paintings. His position at John Reed, thus, is illustrative of his merging art and activism, prior to his decision to reserve his canvases for formal artistic pursuits, and to utilize other outlets for his social concerns. His paintings of the mid-1930's, described in detail later in this chapter, show this early tendency, followed by those of the mid-1940's and beyond, which represent his commitment to nonfigurative form above other artistic concerns.

These formal educational opportunities did not last long. At the John Reed Club Art School, for example, his fellow students, who he viewed as capable artists with little need for further training, initially intimidated Lewis. The artist explained in an oral history interview of 1968, "Romie [Romare Bearden] calls me a loner because I have always been by myself. It is only because, I guess, I felt very inept so that I would rather make my mistakes alone."²¹⁹ Additionally, his colleagues at the Art School were overwhelmingly Caucasian, which may have amplified his feelings of isolation. As a result, he did not return to Reed, nor did he seek formal training

²¹⁹ Norman Lewis, "Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis."

elsewhere. Rather, Lewis taught himself.²²⁰ The artist admitted, “I didn’t want anyone to know what I didn’t know.”²²¹

Lewis studied art and history, while working as a presser. Interestingly, he even managed to turn this work into an artistic educational experience, learning to sew and make dresses. However, this employment was particularly key to Lewis’s career because of the shop’s proximity to the Savage Studio of the Arts and Crafts, also known as the Augusta Savage’s Uptown Art Laboratory, run by artist Augusta Savage, and located directly on Lewis’s path to the dry-cleaning shop.

He stopped in one day in 1933, and Savage told him that he could work on his art at the Laboratory. Lewis agreed and began work in the studio. The artist was more comfortable in this environment. Not only did Savage allow Lewis to work alone at night into the early hours of the morning, but the other artists working there were African American.²²² Savage provided Lewis a launch pad from which to explore his interests and talents. The relationship between the two, however, was strained, with Lewis regularly challenging the learned and well-schooled Savage. Nevertheless, Lewis recognized the integral role Savage played in his career, asserting, “thank heaven for her because she afforded me the opportunity to really get started.”²²³

²²⁰ Henderson, “Norman Lewis,” 60.

²²¹ Ibid., 61.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

Also during the mid-1930s, Lewis started working for the Federal Art Program of the Works Progress Administration.²²⁴ It was through the WPA that he met Jackson Pollock, Adolph Gottlieb, and David Smith.²²⁵ Lewis explained, “the artists still used to see each other at places like the Cedar Bar on 8th St. . . . I used to see Rothko, Barney Newman; and a lot of the other artists – Cliff Still, Rothko, and Reinhardt, we used to meet on 53rd St. at 6th Ave. Out of this came Abstract Expressionism, which I think was something beautiful. And I mention this, because they got together and talked about art like musicians talk about music.”²²⁶

In 1934 he was also accepted as a member into the 306 Group. This famous organization of writers and artists provided a collaborative artistic environment for Lewis, and put him into close contact with other significant African American artists, intellectuals, and writers, such as artists Romare Bearden, Charles Alston, Jacob Lawrence, and writers Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison.²²⁷ In 1935, Lewis helped establish the Harlem Artists Guild, whose members included artists such as Romare Bearden, Beauford and Joseph Delaney, and Selma Burke.²²⁸ Again, this organization provided Lewis with the opportunity to engage with other artists.

Lewis also began his teaching career in the mid-1930s, working under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration teaching art at P.S. 139 and the

²²⁴ “Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, 118.

²²⁵ Ann Eden Gibson, “Black is a Color: Norman Lewis and Modernism in New York,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 15.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ “Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, 118.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Harlem Community Art Center. He remained in this position until 1937, and taught again from 1944 to 1949 at the Thomas Jefferson School of Social Science, New York.²²⁹ During his time at Thomas Jefferson, Lewis taught alongside artist and art theorist Ad Reinhardt, with whom he became close friends and artistic colleagues.²³⁰ Also during this period, in the mid-1940s, Lewis was accepted into the Marian Willard Gallery in New York, and shortly thereafter was given a one-man exhibition in 1949.²³¹

Lewis's local success continued throughout these years, and in 1950 he was included in the Artists' Sessions at Studio 35. These salon-style conversation sessions, moderated by Alfred J. Barr, Jr. and including artists such as Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt, and Willem de Kooning, were "intended to define the Abstract Expressionist movement."²³² The following year, Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, director of MoMA's Department of Painting and Sculpture, included Lewis's work in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America*.²³³ His inclusion in this important exhibition at the powerful MoMA demonstrates art world recognition of the artist. However, despite this and other accolades, Lewis was never in a position to support himself solely through his art. This partial inclusion, in which he was recognized but never fully accepted, represents his lifelong experiences with the art world — acknowledged, but always

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 118-119.

²³³ Ibid., 119.

on its periphery. The rest of his life and career are indicative of this tendency toward recognition void of acceptance.

In 1955, Lewis's painting *Migrating Birds* received the Popularity Prize by visitors to the Pittsburgh International Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute (figure 14),²³⁴ while the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York exhibited other work of his in 1958. The artist resumed his teaching career in 1965, teaching art in the Harlem Youth in Action program until 1971.²³⁵ Then, from 1972 to 1979, he taught at the Art Students League in New York.²³⁶

In 1963, Lewis was a founding member of *Spiral*, an African American artists' collective (with Romare Bearden, Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, and others). *Spiral* was a group of approximately fifteen African American artists who both supported the civil rights movement, and needed a setting in which to discuss their artistic views and careers. Art historian Sharon Patton explains that after officially adopting the title "Spiral," the artists convened at "Bearden's Christopher Street studio, where the group explored their creative philosophies, their value and worth as visual artists, often using the opportunity to reflect on their own careers."²³⁷ Most importantly, they asserted that their work did not have to realistically reflect the issues of the day. The very existence of this group, however, represents the marginalization that mid-century African American artists experienced.

²³⁴ Ibid. I discuss this painting in detail later in the chapter.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Sharon Patton, *African-American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185.

As the first president of *Spiral*, Lewis explained that he and other mid-century African American artists needed a group in which they could discuss art and the challenges they faced in the art world. He noted, “there was a tremendous need for this kind of group. A lot of things had been happening to me, which I didn’t quite understand. Why such a reception from the public that my projection on the American scene wasn’t similar to people like DeKooning, Barry Newman, and even the lesser ones. And I noticed that people like Hale Woodruff, Romi Bearden, Charles White, Ernie Crichlow, Jacob Lawrence, these people who have been painting for a long time and have tremendous things to say and yet they were always being sidetracked [sic].”²³⁸ Getting at the heart of the matter, Lewis probed the formal and quality aspects of reception, explaining, “A group of us got together to discuss the problems, the fact that we had existed for quite a while and that one of the things always constant was the economic thing. Despite the fact that their work was no worse than anybody else, that even the worst white artist got along better. And there was some togetherness there and it was nourished.”²³⁹ However, Lewis argued that the discriminatory elements of the art world stepped beyond critical and market reception, even affecting the collaboration among artists. He asserted, “Since white power structure can divide and conquer some of the artists were singled out which destroyed the group . . . I still think there is a need for this kind of organization and Romie, Crichlow and myself have tried to keep it going to pressure the white press and black cats to give us the necessary publicity that we need to enhance

²³⁸ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

²³⁹ Ibid.

ourselves.”²⁴⁰ In 1969, the artist established the Cinque Gallery, with Romare Bearden and Ernest Crichlow,²⁴¹ to display the work of emerging and African American artists.

Picketing the Metropolitan

Lewis’s experience with the mid-century art world led him to picket the Metropolitan Museum of Art for its showcasing of the controversial exhibition, *Harlem On My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900-1968*.²⁴² This 1969 exhibition, art historian Bridget R. Cooks explains, “sought to explore the cultural history of the predominantly Black community of Harlem, New York.”²⁴³ However, the Metropolitan Museum denied Harlem residents the opportunity to help plan the show. Additionally, the museum excluded works created by “Harlem’s thriving artist community.”²⁴⁴ Cooks concludes, “Near the end of the Civil Rights Movement and the beginning of the Black Power Movement, Black culture emerged in the Metropolitan not as creative producer but as ethnographic study.”²⁴⁵

In the early days of his art career, Lewis produced realistic paintings often steeped in social realism. A staunch civil rights advocate throughout his life, Lewis

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Kinshasha Holman Conwill, “Introduction: The Importance of Being Norman,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 9.

²⁴² “Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, 119.

²⁴³ Bridget R. Cooks, “Black Artists and Activism: Harlem on My Mind (1969),” *American Studies*, 48, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 5.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

initially explored the subject explicitly, before determining other outlets for social concerns and reserving the canvas for exploration of the formal properties of painting. This shift occurred in the mid-1940s. Lewis described the subject of his artistic output during the early part of his artistic development as “the exploitation of blacks in New York City and America . . . I painted a lot of things like people being dispossessed, lynchings, and later fascism.”²⁴⁶ However, within his art, Lewis determined that his focus was best directed toward the formal principles of painting. Henderson explains, “While paintings of rotting tenements, evictions and homeless men warming themselves by bonfires satisfied the emotional needs of black artists to feel they were contributing to the struggle to improve conditions for their people, these socially conscious paintings did not satisfy the developing artist in Norman Lewis.”²⁴⁷

Johnny the Wanderer, a 1933, oil on canvas, for which Lewis won honorable mention at a 1933 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, exhibition, illustrates his early style (figure 11). Here a centrally posed, seated African American man wearing a heavy coat, pants, shoes, and a hat which shades most of his face from the onlooker, warms his hands over a small lantern. Although he appears to sit in a boarded structure, snow covers the ground around him and on the interior back wall. The upper right corner of the painting reveals a broken wall, and thus the entry route for the snow. The figure sits hunched over the lantern, his head down, and shoulders rolled forward. Lewis explored shadow through the painting, from the fiery orange

²⁴⁶ Henderson, “Norman Lewis,” 61.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

reflection of the lantern flame on the man's torso and hat, to the deep, black shadow of the seated figure produced in the floor, to the light escaping the structure's opening and bathing the back left part of the wooden wall and picture in lighter tonalities of brown and white. To express the somber mood of this man in a dilapidated structure, Lewis limited his palette to muted browns, grays, and whites infused with the subtle yet intense pop of the oranges.

Lewis maintained an interest in a single subject composition in his creation of *Yellow Hat*, 1936 (figure 12). This oil on burlap picture shows a seated woman depicted from a slight angle, with her right forearm on her lap and crossing her waist, supporting her left arm, which is raised to her face. The artist uses a large hat to hide the details of the figure's face. The viewer of this picture, like the aforementioned image, must depend on social cues around clothing to determine the figure's gender. The figure in *Yellow Hat* wears a large rimmed, round hat possibly made of straw. She is attired in a fitted, strict, and straight white short-sleeved shirt with a muted skirt that appears to hit just below her knees. She sits with her right leg over her left. The background is nondescript, and Lewis utilizes this space to explore formal artistic properties like shadow, line, and surface. Unlike *The Wanderer*, Lewis treats the figure as an amalgamation of shapes and lines, rather than imbuing the work with the level of solemn emotion just described. The simplicity of detail and removal of all external reference in *Yellow Hat* creates a serious, thoughtful mood. The only somber element here is the figure's hunched shoulders. The painting therefore seems less an opportunity for social commentary with *The Wanderer*, in which the viewer is met

with a man struggling to stay warm in an abandoned structure, and more an opportunity to create mood through formal elements.

Of his incorporation of figures in his early works, Lewis explained that they represent “humanity in terms of the space in which you live.”²⁴⁸ By that, he referred to “the analogy that human beings are almost like ants . . . you notice them going into Macy’s, everybody goes into the same . . . doorway waiting for the revolving door yet nobody takes the initiative to open the other door which exists there . . . I have always been interested in people yet Romie [Romare Bearden] says I am a loner and I am aloof.”²⁴⁹ In spite of this admission, Lewis nevertheless recognized his complicated relationship to the larger society. He proclaimed, “But I still observe because whatever affects others affects me . . . I used to paint pictures . . . about how people followed each other and the movement of people and yet it was always the individual that was against the masses.”²⁵⁰

Lewis thus worked in a realistic style throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, before turning to nonfigurative form. He purchased art books in order to carefully observe past artists, in an effort to teach himself how to draw and paint. He also explored ways he could artistically contribute to the art historical canon. Through his studies, he determined that he would utilize his painting for formal artistic interests, and reserve his political interests for social activism in the form of picketing, for instance. Lewis explained his stylistic alteration from an idiom entrenched in social

²⁴⁸ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

causes to one replaced by purely formal mandates.²⁵¹ He noted, “I used to paint Negroes being dispossessed, discrimination, and slowly I became aware of that fact that this didn’t move anybody, it didn’t make things better and that if I had the guts to, which I did periodically in those days, it was to picket . . . I found the only way to solve anything was to go out and take some kind of physical action.”²⁵² He searched for new formal and visual ideas that could interest onlookers. He noted, “painting, like music, had something inherent in itself which I had to discover and which is 3-dimensional. So that with this kind of awareness naturally you really get with yourself and you wonder what can I say, what do I have to say that can be of any value, what can I say that can arouse someone to look at and feel awed about.”²⁵³

During the mid-1940s, Lewis thus increasingly concentrated on the formal properties of painting.²⁵⁴ He abstracted his works by emphasizing line, heavy, deep, rich color, less realistic forms, and the removal of a focal point. He spread the pigment across the surface of the canvas. Art historian David Craven writes, “Lewis produced highly nuanced ‘allover’ paintings beginning in 1944, making them some of the earliest of this type in the history of art. (‘Allover’ is a term used to refer to compositions that have no central focal point and which are animated with relative

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ In fact, in his 1949 application for a Guggenheim Fellowship, Lewis wrote, “For many years, I, too, struggled single-mindedly to express social conflict through my painting. However, gradually I came to realize that certain things are true: the development of one’s aesthetic abilities suffers by such an emphasis; the content of truly creative work must be inherently aesthetic or the work becomes merely another form of illustration; therefore the goal of the artist must be aesthetic development.” Norman Lewis, “Application for Guggenheim Fellowship, 1949,” in *Norman Lewis: From the Harlem Renaissance to Abstraction*, exh. cat. (New York: Kenkeleba House, Inc., 1989), 65.

density and visual weight throughout the entire canvas.)”²⁵⁵ Indeed, many of his paintings beginning in this period, and throughout his career, revealed the density and weight that Craven describes. Lewis transformed these formal aspects of painting into characters in their own right, in which paintings reveal little association to real world figures and serve as pulsating forms and features with movement and intensity. Of his use of form and content, Lewis explained, “The thing of form, I think that much of what happens and what one becomes is definitely an outgrowth of what one feels . . . It is discovering what one can do in paint, what one can achieve, what visually excites you and what you want to see that hasn’t been done.”²⁵⁶

As Lewis increasingly abstracted his style, critics in turn associated some of his stylistic components with better-known artists, such as Mark Tobey. However, such connections were deemed negative, with critics implying a lack of originality. For example, in a 1949 edition of the *New York Sun*, a critic asserted that Lewis was “too close for comfort to the style employed by Mark Tobey. One Mark Tobey is enough.”²⁵⁷ Thus while his evolving style was inspired by the sights around him, as well as his studies of art history and exploration of the formal elements of painting, nevertheless, some critics discounted his work on account of its resemblance to other, well-established artists such as Tobey.

An example of his early nonfigurative style is *Blending* of 1951 (figure 13).

In this work, Lewis created an all-over black and white composition with jagged

²⁵⁵ David Craven, “Norman Lewis as Political Activist and Post-Colonial Artist,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 51.

²⁵⁶ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

²⁵⁷ Henry McBride, “Attractions in the Galleries: Willard Gallery,” *New York Sun*, March 4, 1949, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

edges radiating from the center. The vertically elongated forms pulsate from the center of the image, with looser, diffused, billowy, soft forms around the edges. His limited palette allows total focus of the forms, which emulate visual depictions of sound waves in space. Thus the artist expressed his deep interest in formal relationships, where even the palette is simplified so that the lines, contours, and spacial interactions in the painting are prominent. Lewis described his artistic outlook in creating this work, explaining, “It has no social connotation to me. I wanted to see if I could get out of black the suggestion of other nuances of color, using it in such a way as to arouse others . . . using color in such a way that it could become other things.”²⁵⁸

He increasingly abstracted his paintings throughout the 1950s, often visually expressing form, movement, and force. Lewis described his interest in nonfigurative form, noting, “I started that way just trying to convey this movement of people . . . I tried to paint this thing and it was just a question of painting . . . Instead of individual masses and showing a lot of heads it was just a blob of black paint or white paint.”²⁵⁹

Lewis painted *Migrating Birds* utilizing a palette characterized by rust, deep ochre, and white paint. This painting simultaneously draws the eye into its central ochre void, and out to the edges of the surface, where the rust and deep green-brown paints float around the outermost portion of the canvas. In between this central area and the surface’s edges are white iridescent, loose applications of paint of varied density. The lower left area of white paint leads the eye up its side to a less populated

²⁵⁸ Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 321.

²⁵⁹ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

though still busy area of white paint, which in turn then directs attention to the right part of the canvas, almost touching the less built up surface that dominates this area. This white paint creates movement around the canvas as it encircles the painting's central void. It creates texture and mass, as well as motion. Lewis's decision to limit his palette to rich, deep colors enhances the intensity of the picture. Furthermore, the variation of brushstroke, where at times he used quick thick strokes and at others a smooth application, creates dynamism.

Lewis was inspired by nature in creating this work. In fact, he kept a pigeon coop on the roof of his building in Harlem, and fed the birds daily. His observations of the pigeons' movement, circling and flying in, was the impetus for *Migrating Birds*.²⁶⁰ Thus, even though he lived in an urban metropolis, like Frankenthaler, Lewis was nevertheless an avid observer of nature and natural forms. He filled his studio with plants and fish tanks.²⁶¹ Nature thereby influenced his approach to his nonfigurative paintings, much like the other artists studied herein. Henderson argues, "What distinguished Lewis from other Abstract Expressionists was his profound, absorbing interest in nature, including the nature of human behavior."²⁶²

Lewis's oil on canvas painting entitled *Processional* of 1965 exemplifies the artist's utilization of a black and white palette to show white triangular-shaped forms roughly depicted across the surface of a black canvas (figure 15). By applying the white paint to the black background, Lewis created a dramatic yet elegant exploration

²⁶⁰ Henderson, "Norman Lewis," 62.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid., 63.

in contrasts. He communicated, too, in form and depth; with each stroke the viewer is both allowed and denied depth and description. Art historians and critics often assert that the painting appears to refer to the artist's involvement with civil rights and race relations. He explained of such notions, "I find that civil rights affects me; so what am I going to paint, what am I going to do. I don't know. And I am sure it will have nothing to do with civil rights directly but I just hope that I can materialize something out of all this frustration as a black artist in America . . . I am sure that if I do succeed in painting a black experience I won't recognize it myself."²⁶³ Lewis's comments are reminiscent of Frankenthaler's, when asked about the connection between self and her art. While Frankenthaler evaded the question, explaining to the interviewer that it is impossible to separate the self from one's painting, Lewis directly addressed the query. His comments indicate the connectedness of his art and life, and yet also reveal his insistence that any inclusion of allusion to race is unintentional. Nevertheless, as civil rights were of primary concern to African Americans during this period, including Lewis, scholars and critics invariably read issues of race into his nonfigurative creations, over concern for his interest and passion in nature, plants, fish, and the formal qualities of painting—color, line, shape, and form.²⁶⁴

Wandering from Job to Job

Lewis explained to interviewer Henri Ghent the difficulties African American artists faced. The artist noted, "I don't think any black artist makes a living. Despite his prominence or what he contributes to American culture it is always sort of second

²⁶³ Norman Lewis, "Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis."

²⁶⁴ I address this reception in detail in chapter seven.

class. I think that someone like Duke Ellington and his contribution to music, this man should be a millionaire in comparison to somebody like Paul Whiteman.”²⁶⁵ In fact, Lewis supported himself through a variety of means. Between 1929 and 1931, he worked as a pageboy in the George M. Cohan Theater in New York, as well as a presser, tailor, and dressmaker. He also traveled through South America as a seaman.²⁶⁶ Lewis discussed his many jobs, “I teach. I have driven a taxi, I have been an elevator operator, I have been a pants presser, I have washed floors, I have been a cook, I have been a seaman, I have sewed dresses, I have sustained myself in whatever the moment and has been necessary to just exist” [sic].²⁶⁷

While his work as a seaman took him abroad, Lewis traveled throughout Europe and South America later in his career as well; these experiences had a profound effect on his perspective. He explained that through his association with the Willard Gallery, he met American artists who knew European artists. As a result, he noted, “when I went to Europe I met Miro and I met many of the established people who worked at the Bauhaus in Germany and who came here as expatriates from Germany. This was very beautiful for me because I never met them in America. And yet they were very anxious to know me and part of my stay in Spain, which I spent some nine months, three each in Italy and France and Spain [sic].²⁶⁸

Lewis was recognized with a variety of prestigious awards throughout his career, including the Mark Rothko Foundation grant and the National Endowment for

²⁶⁵ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

²⁶⁶ “Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, 118.

²⁶⁷ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the Arts' Individual Artists Fellowship, both in 1972; and a John Solomon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship in 1975.²⁶⁹ His first retrospective exhibition was in 1976 at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. The show, entitled *Norman Lewis: A Retrospective*, was held when the artist was in his sixties and just three years prior to his death.

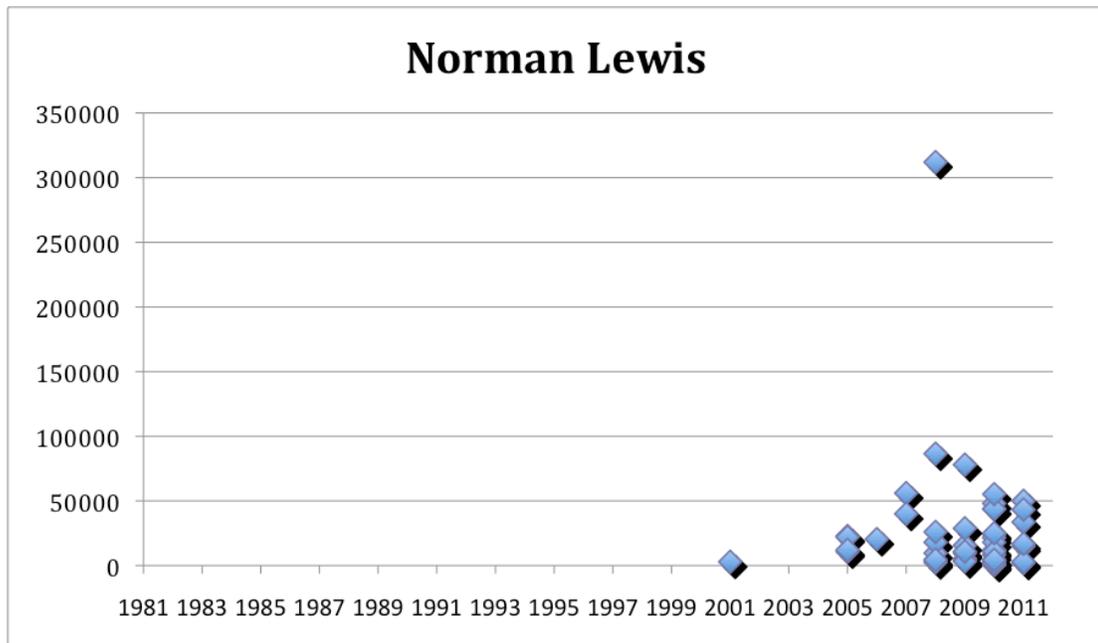
Although he lived with a companion, Joan Murray Weissman, from 1946 to 1952, he did not marry until late in life. Norman Lewis and Ouida Bramwell married in 1976, and had no children. He died on August 27, 1979, in New York.

Slow and Scant Auction Market Performance

An examination of Lewis's market performance reveals that social forces impacted his reception and career, delaying his market acceptance and minimizing his critical accolades. As such, Lewis's biography is closely connected to the market for his paintings. An overview of his auction sales shows the artist's slow and scant market acceptance. Norman Lewis has had 77 works come up on the auction block since the early 1980s, 64% of which have sold. His highest auction price was achieved in October of 2008, with a sale price of \$312,000.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Chronology," in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, 119.

²⁷⁰ See "Auction Records for Norman Lewis," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORDS&artist=101558.



Lewis’s output did not begin selling on the auction block until the early 2000’s.²⁷¹ While his work has reached the \$300,000 mark, that sale is an outlier, with the dominant majority of his works selling below \$100,000. His sales volume remains scant, and is marked by primarily regional interest by less dominant auction houses. Although his work has reached the New York market through Christie’s, Rockefeller Center, the majority sees interest from smaller auction houses.

²⁷¹ In fact, Lewis’s widow, Ouida Bramwell Lewis, has control of many of Lewis’s pictures. Since this factor affects the availability of Lewis’s works to the auction market, it must be considered in analysis of his auction market sales history.

Chapter 5: Alma Thomas: Southern Courtesy Cocooning an Artist's Life

Life Overview

Alma Woodsey Thomas was an observer of all things in nature. From childhood in her family home in Columbus, Georgia, and summers on her grandfather's expansive property on the Chattahoochee River, to her final days in Washington, DC, Thomas was closely engaged with the sights and sounds of nature. Throughout her life, she recalled early memories of nature, sought to make new ones, and visually incorporated these recollections in her art. Although the artist moved from a scenic natural environment in the south to an urban residential neighborhood in Washington, DC, Thomas took pleasure in noticing the natural elements around her. Her affinity for nature permeated her life and linked her experiences and impressions as a child to her outlook and perspective as an adult. The artist once asserted (presumably in reference to her childhood), "I would wade in the brook and when it rained you could hear music. I would fall on the grass and look at the lovely yellow leaves and would whistle."²⁷² Further, she explained to journalist Jacqueline Trescott in 1971, "We lived in a section of Columbus, Ga. called 'Rose Hill' and our house was surrounded by beautiful flower gardens. The seasons, the flowers, the sea—all of nature—have become a permanent part of my paintings."²⁷³ In

²⁷² Quoted in Joe Fyfe, "Alma Thomas's Late Blossoms," *Art in America* 90, no. 1 (January 2002): 100.

²⁷³ Jacqueline Trescott, "The Seasons, The Flowers, The Sea . . . All a Part of Her Paintings," *The Sunday Star*, August 29, 1971, F-3, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Washington, DC, she insisted on regular visits to the National Arboretum until the very end of her life.

Born in Columbus, Georgia, on September 22, 1891, Thomas was the eldest of four children. She and her three sisters, Kathryn, Fannie (who died at age 9), and John Maurice (named for their father John Harris), were raised in a Victorian house in the Rose Hill section of Columbus. Her parents, who married in June of 1888, made education and opportunity a priority not only in their own lives, but in the raising of their daughters as well. Her mother, Amelia Cantey Thomas, graduated from the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, was a teacher and dressmaker, and played the violin as a hobby.²⁷⁴ In reminiscing about her mother, Thomas declared that she “didn’t let us fall down for one minute.”²⁷⁵ Her father, John Harris Thomas, was a businessman who owned landed estates in Alabama with his half-brother.²⁷⁶ Regular fixtures in her upbringing were Thomas’s aunts, many of whom graduated from the Tuskegee Institute and were teachers like her mother. During summers, Thomas visited her maternal grandparents on their 500-1000-acre farm on the Chattahoochee River in Alabama, located about ten miles south of Columbus. Her maternal grandfather, Winter Cantey, was a veterinarian and cotton planter who also bred horses. Fannie Cantey, her maternal grandmother, was a homemaker. Mr. Cantey built a small schoolhouse for local children on their estate. This action, combined with the

²⁷⁴ The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama is now Tuskegee University, a school founded in 1881 with the mission of providing an education and trade training to African Americans. Booker T. Washington was the first principal of the school, until his death in 1915.

²⁷⁵ Andrea O. Cohen, “Alma Thomas,” *D.C. Gazette*, October 26, 1970.

²⁷⁶ Merry A. Foresta, *A Life in Art: Alma Thomas, 1891-1978*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 15.

decision to send his children to the Tuskegee Institute, demonstrates his belief in the importance of education.

Alma Thomas grew up in a “cultured and educational setting,”²⁷⁷ where books were plentiful, and her aunts regularly hosted African American and white professors from Atlanta. At these gatherings, they engaged in conversations about history, the classics, and Latin.²⁷⁸ In spite of being born with a hearing and speech impediment, or perhaps in working to overcome it, Thomas thrived in her childhood environment.²⁷⁹ Of the cultural setting in which she was raised, she explained, “Everyone in my family was creative. My father was a businessman. All the women in my family were teachers, graduates of Tuskegee Institute. Yet I think I inherited a distinct feeling for colors from my mother who was also a violinist and clothes designer.”²⁸⁰

Washington, DC

In 1907, the Thomas family relocated to Washington, DC, a move motivated by increased racial tensions in the South, including the 1906 Atlanta race riots, and restrictions on African Americans seeking education beyond the ninth grade. Her parents wanted to relocate to a city where Thomas and her sisters would not only be safe, but could continue their education. As Thomas’s aunt and uncle resided in

²⁷⁷ Benjamin Forgey, “Alma W. Thomas Dies; Famed District Painter,” *The Washington Star*, February 25, 1978, A-7.

²⁷⁸ Foresta, *A Life in Art*, 15.

²⁷⁹ Eleanor Munro, “The Late Springtime of Alma Thomas,” *Washington Post Magazine*, April 15, 1979, 23.

²⁸⁰ Trescott, “The Seasons, The Flowers, The Sea . . . All a Part of Her Paintings,” F-3.

Washington, DC, her parents could provide the children with a family environment, similar to their upbringing in Columbus.

Upon arrival in Washington, DC, Amelia Thomas told one of her daughters “to remove her shoes and knock the Georgia sand from them.”²⁸¹ Although the family left Georgia in the aftermath of dangerous race riots and pervasive, discriminatory educational laws, in interviews Thomas minimized the impact of racial discord on her family in Georgia. For example, she asserted “Of course when I was a child in Columbus there were places we couldn’t eat.”²⁸² The artist noted, however, that her family “believed in working hard and making the most of the opportunities you had, and that’s what I did.”²⁸³ Further, Thomas asserted, “There are no short cuts. You have to work. You need a good foundation, and then hard work. And you have to use common sense.”²⁸⁴

Washington, DC, was segregated when the Thomases relocated; however, educational and employment opportunities were more abundant than in early twentieth-century Georgia.²⁸⁵ In fact, art historian Tritobia Hayes Benjamin explains, “Many African Americans were employed as civil servants and teachers, and a few

²⁸¹ Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, “From Academic Representation to Poetic Abstraction,” in *Alma W. Thomas, A Retrospective of the Paintings*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), 18.

Author Andrea Cohen notes that Amelia Thomas touched Alma’s sister and said “you take your shoes off and knock that Georgia sand out of them. Don’t you ever go back there again.” Cohen, “Alma Thomas,” 13.

²⁸² Mary Margret Byrne, “She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life,” *The Columbus Enquirer*, March 15, 1973, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Benjamin, “From Academic Representation to Poetic Abstraction,” 18.

worked as lawyers, dentists, doctors, and businessmen and women. Such individuals formed an elite class, hosting cotillions, banquets, and lavish weddings, and establishing African American social and cultural clubs.”²⁸⁶

Thomas enrolled in the Armstrong Technical High School in Washington, DC. There, she honed her keen interest in the arts, including fine art, architecture, and drawing. Art collector and dealer Thurlow E. Tibbs, Jr. asserts that Thomas artistically benefited from “philosophical guidance of organizer and first principal Wilson Bruce Evans whose belief in ‘work with the hand, the mind and the spirit’ set the atmosphere for the training available to his students.”²⁸⁷ She then attended the Miner Teachers Normal School and focused on early childhood education. Upon graduation, Thomas taught at the Thomas Garrett Settlement House, in Wilmington, Delaware, (then directed it) from 1915 to 1921, before returning to Washington, DC, for college.

In 1921, Thomas enrolled in the home economics department at Howard University. Although she planned to become a costume designer, fine arts professor James V. Herring urged Thomas to participate in the newly founded department of art. As a result, Thomas majored in fine art and studied primarily under Herring, in addition to sculptor May Howard Jackson. In fact, she became the university's first student to major in art. Her mentor, Professor Herring, “acknowledged the fact that she was a hard worker who would find her place on the ladder of great American painters. To his joy and amazement before he departed his life in the late sixties, he

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Thurlow E. Tibbs, Jr., *Six Washington Masters: The Evans Tibbs Collection*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Evans-Tibbs Collection, 1981), 14.

was greatly rewarded in seeing her take her place among the ranks of great American painters.”²⁸⁸ Thomas completed her education at Howard, as the first graduate of its Department of Art in 1924 and believed to be the first African American woman in the United States to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in fine arts.

Teaching and Learning Simultaneously

A combination of her desire to give back to her community and the pragmatic need to support herself led Thomas into a full-time teaching career; first for one term as a drawing instructor at Cheyney Training School for Teachers, in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, where she met artist Laura Wheeler Waring, and then beginning in February of 1925, at Shaw Junior High School in Washington, DC. She remained at Shaw until her retirement in 1960. Nevertheless, Thomas continued her formal education over the summers beginning in 1930, attending the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York, and earning a Master of Arts degree in art education in 1934. Always yearning for more education and ways to expand her horizons, Thomas attended weekend and evening creative painting classes from 1950 to 1960 at American University, an arts institution unto itself during this period, where many established Washington painters taught. In particular, artist Jacob Kainen’s abstract painting classes influenced Thomas, who during this time changed her style from one of realism to a more serious focus on geometric patterns and color. Although she never fully abandoned her focus on the natural world, Kainen’s classes helped Thomas establish a new way to explore and represent her vision. She also

²⁸⁸ Adolphus Ealey, “Introduction,” in *Alma W. Thomas, Recent Paintings*, exh. cat., Howard University Gallery of Art (Washington, DC: Howard University Gallery of Art, 1975).

studied with Robert Gates and Ben (Joe) Summerford at American, both of whom had a significant impact on the artist. Additionally, in 1958, under the auspices of Temple University's Tyler School of Fine Art, Thomas went on a summer tour of Europe. She visited a host of museums and sites, such as London's Tate Gallery; the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam; Florence's Uffizi Gallery; and the Capitoline Museum in Rome. This trip was a study tour, and as such the artist attended many lectures, plays, and visited a host of European art centers. It was the combination of these experiences, in conjunction with her outlook on life, that led Thomas to develop her distinctive painting style and vision.

Thomas was heavily involved in improving Washington's young adults' awareness of the arts. Not only did she teach at Shaw, but also from 1934 to 1940, she organized and oversaw the Marionette Club, which presented plays for local art students at locations in the African American community. From 1936 to 1939, Thomas put together the School Arts League with the goal of improving art appreciation among select junior high school students. Then, in 1937, Thomas started another group, the Junior High School Arts Club, whose members visited local museums and attended regular lectures at Howard. Even after her 1960 retirement from Shaw, she started the Beauty Club in 1962, with the express purpose of increasing arts awareness in her neighborhood, presenting films and information on art. The following year, Thomas organized exhibitions and classes for the Washington, DC, Commissioners Youth Council. She thus maintained her connection to the local community throughout her life, even into her 70s, teaching children from 1964 to 1966 at the Uplift House, a community center in Anacostia,

Washington, DC, and leading artists' workshops in 1968 for Isis Artists, a non-profit organization. This extraordinary outpouring of time and support for her community was formally recognized in 1972, when Mayor Walter Washington declared September 9, "Alma W. Thomas Day," in Washington, DC. That same month local radio and television programs paid homage to her art and her life.

Thomas was also deeply entrenched in the Washington, DC, arts community throughout her adult life. Through her work at the Barnett-Aden Gallery, she kept her pulse on contemporary art happenings. This private institution was like no other during its time—a tour-de-force, exhibiting African American and white artists side-by-side, with the goal of showing sound examples of contemporary art regardless of race. Thomas's role in the gallery was instrumental, where she served as a founding member in 1943 with James V. Herring and Alonzo J. Aden. She also met a variety of artists through the Barnett-Aden Gallery, including leading members of the Washington Color School, Gene Davis and Morris Louis. Additionally, from 1946 to 1950, Thomas was a member of "The Little Paris Studio." This small group of local Washington, DC, artists, organized by Louis Mailou Jones and Celine Tabary, critiqued each other's work and exhibited together.²⁸⁹

Retiring to Begin Another Career

In addition to her extracurricular activities and involvement in local arts organizations, Thomas devoted her time and energies post-Shaw to full-time painting. She took an active part in the Washington, DC, arts scene, developing her idiom based on an interest in color and nature. She combined her lessons at American

²⁸⁹ See Janet Gail Abbott, "The Barnett Aden Gallery: A Home for Diversity in a Segregated City" (PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2008), ProQuest (AAT 3346281).

University with her knowledge of art through Barnett-Aden and her attention to up-to-the-moment art magazines, entering the arts scene when she was almost seventy.

Thomas artistically developed at a time when entering the highly regulated art scene was still quite unusual for African American women. Art critic Amei Wallach explains that the period in which Thomas emerged as an artist provided a host of societal challenges. Wallach asserts, “The sixties were a decade of men. But by the mid-seventies a new generation of extraordinary women artists emerged, most notably Susan Rothenberg and Elizabeth Murray . . . But Elizabeth Murray tends to be dismissed as a ‘girl Frank Stella’ . . . Susan Rothenberg isn’t half so famous as David Salle.”²⁹⁰ Wallach recognizes the challenge for artists of this period, explaining, “Their problem will be to continue painting wonderfully despite the frustrations. In the end, it is endurance that counts in the life of an artist. It matters as much as inventiveness, as much as how wide the circle of influence.”²⁹¹ Wallach’s comments apply to Thomas on a number of levels; the artist had a new, unique approach to painting, and her work was never confused with that of a male colleague. However, as a result of limited access and opportunity, she was unable to have a lasting career, as hers did not officially begin until late in life, and even then, her influence and reach were limited. Perhaps aware of this reality, the artist proclaimed “If only I could turn back the clock, I’d show them.”²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Amei Wallach, “Arts and Craftiness,” *Ms.* 1-2, (July 18, 1989): 26.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² “Older Artists: Their Genius Still Showing,” *AARP news bulletin*, September 1982, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

It is useful to divide Thomas's painting career into five distinct periods, based on her stylistic changes and progression.²⁹³ With regard to her development as a painter, the artist noted,

In 1960 I retired from teaching and devoted my entire time to serious painting. Beginning as an academic painter, I passed through an expressionist stage, and emerged as an abstract painter, using the pure color parallel strip format pioneered by the Washington Color Painters. My strokes are free and irregular, some close together, others far apart, thus creating interesting patterns of canvas peeping around the strokes.²⁹⁴

Indeed, the early stage of her art making started with an academic interest in representational works. Thurlow E. Tibbs, Jr. wrote of Thomas's early artistic development: "It was during the 1950s that her first serious paintings such as 'Study of a Young Girl' were completed. In the work the influence of teachers such as Jacob Kainen and Lois Jones is evident, where color is the catalyst for breaking down the hard-edged planes in her composition."²⁹⁵

In this 1955 oil on fiberboard painting, the primary details with which Thomas was concerned include color, shape, and outline, rather than facial structure or specific aspects of body and clothing (figure 16). *Study of a Young Girl* shows a central, frontal figure posing for the onlooker. The figure, presumably a woman—due to the title and clothing—comprises the majority of the fiberboard, and stands in the foreground of the picture. She slightly twists, allowing Thomas to paint the movement of the figure's right arm around her waist, and her head tilts to her right.

²⁹³ After reviewing her *oeuvre* in detail, I divided her output into these five periods based on her formal interests. The purpose of this organization is to provide a framework for her changing styles, which often occurred in a relatively short period.

²⁹⁴ Hilton Kramer, "Art: Imposition of a Racial Category: '12 Afro-Americans' at Nordness Gallery," *New York Times*, January, 25, 1969, 23.

²⁹⁵ Tibbs, *Six Washington Masters*, 14.

While her skin is brown, shirt off the shoulders and white, and skirt and headscarf red, Thomas utilized a broader palette in exploring the area around the figure. She studied the contrasts of aquamarine blue and yellow behind the figure, the brown tones that appear as shadows in these areas, and the outlines reminiscent of chairs in the foreground. Indeed, *Study of a Young Girl* demonstrates Thomas's increasing interest in the utilization of color to form shapes and outlines on the surface of the painting. However, she sketchily paints the subtle nuances within these areas to highlight shadows and nuances seen by the eye. It was indeed during this period of the early to mid-1950s that Thomas explored the representation of the natural world through still life and outdoor scenes, composed in either a cubistic-like fashion, or one more oriented towards an impressionistic rendering with an open scene and a thick application of paint. Individual facial features were secondary to an interest in paint application. *Study of a Young Girl* illustrates this latter tendency, with its thick impasto and impressionistic focus.

Next, in the late 1950s, Thomas's work indicated a looser experimentation with paint marked by blocks of color with loose edges. The impasto is heavy and rich, and again, her interest in details—facial features and exactitude—yield to a commitment to paint qualities. *Blue and Brown Still Life*, oil on fiberboard (1958), demonstrates this new tendency (figure 17). The specific details of the scene are enveloped by the loose paint application. While the artist maintained her neutral palette of aquamarines, rust orange, and periwinkle green, sharing space with muted whites and blacks and accentuated with the occasional bright orange and red, she

focused even less on a natural scene, and more on the formal properties of the painting.

In the early to mid-1960s, (approximately 1960 to 1966), Thomas worked in a more gestural manner, marked by a loose, watercolor-like application of paint. She also continued her interest in patches of color, which included some representational imagery. Tibbs explains, “By the time she had retired from the public school system in 1960, Alma Thomas began to exhibit annually at the DuPont Theatre Art Gallery in Washington, DC. During this period her abstract style blossomed. Works from that period show Thomas’ surfaces breaking down into total abstraction.”²⁹⁶ While her works never completely broke with connection to aspects of the lived world, *Spring Fantasy* demonstrates how Thomas quickly developed a style heavily focused on color and shape rather than actual details of a natural scene (figure 18). In this 1963 watercolor, Thomas explored the flattened shape of a leaf, the ‘subject’ allowing her to explore the range of green hues. She loosely applied the vertical structure in the form of black, thin, spaced vertical lines evoking veins of a leaf. Around this structure, she applied the green and yellow hues with a sponge-like application, comprising the full left and right portion of the work. Maintaining a central void, Thomas relayed the juxtaposition between the flatness of the image with the inherent depth created by applying watercolor paint to the paper. In particular, the green areas of the flat ‘leaves’ contrast sharply with the black ‘veins’ which seek to be read as textured and grainy.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 15.

From 1966 to 1972, Thomas expanded her interest in blocks of color. She applied paint to the canvas in a sponge-like manner, working with color based on individual cells in relation to one another, rather than representing a precise scene of the outside world. She transitioned from earlier abstractions to a focus on geometrical compositions resembling mosaics.²⁹⁷

Untitled, a watercolor on paper painting of 1966, captures the process of this stylistic change (figure 19). Appearing as if it is a close-up portion of a larger image, Thomas isolated her previous sponge-like forms, and expanded upon this paint application in *Untitled*. She primarily extinguished interest in representing natural form, as she utilized primary, saturated colors like blues, reds, greens, and yellows. In place of a central void, Thomas filled the center of this composition completely, reserving the voided areas for the upper left and right corners, and bottom left corner and center bottom of the paper. The small, blotted forms curve around one another, almost forming a language unto themselves as they dance across the surface of the paper.

Air View of Spring Nursery, too, a 1966 acrylic on canvas painting demonstrates this transition (figure 20). Here, Thomas used acrylic to create tesserae-like shapes on the canvas, carefully arranged into 33 horizontal lines varying in thickness. She called this technique “Alma stripes,” as the combination of color, form, and line represented her interest in the formal components of painting such as line and color. The artist used a broad palette of blue, gray, turquoise, pink, yellow,

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

orange, red, green, white and purple. She limited each stripe to a single color, and alternated colors throughout the canvas.

Thomas expanded upon her use of “Alma stripes” in subsequent paintings. In 1970, she painted *Red Violet Nursery Viewed from Above* (figure 21). She utilized the same technique as *Air View of Spring Nursery*, creating 33 stripes of varying thickness and composed of mosaic-like forms. In this painting, however, Thomas arranged the stripes in a vertical pattern, and relied primarily on red paint to create movement, tension, and contrast in the work. Less striking colors in the canvas include green and blue, yellow and pink. Furthermore, since Thomas allowed slight space between each mosaic shape, the white of the canvas pops through the painted shapes and creates a shimmering effect.

Springtime in Washington, created in 1971, illustrates Thomas’s continued interest in “Alma stripes,” however in this acrylic on canvas painting, the artist applied the mosaic-like shapes in circular lines forming an overall bulls-eye (figure 22).²⁹⁸ She painted approximately 23 circular lines of primarily red mosaic-like shapes, emanating from a pale green center. Her placement of yellow lines in the middle and outer portions of the circle pulls the eye towards the center of the composition while simultaneously pushing it out. The central pale green center

²⁹⁸ The Washington Color School, and particularly, Gene Davis and Kenneth Noland, likely influenced Thomas in the design of several of her paintings. As Noland utilized the circle form prior to Thomas, *Springtime in Washington* is feasibly connected to his works of this theme (Figure 22). Davis worked with stripes, lending credence to the correlation between his influence and the design of her works, *Air View of Spring Nursery* and *Red Violet Nursery Viewed from Above* (Figures 20 and 21). Jonathan P. Binstock asserts, “Following her work with stripes (Gene Davis’s most celebrated stylistic contribution to the group), Thomas went on to explore circles, a motif usually identified with the work of Kenneth Noland.” Jonathan P. Binstock, “Apolitical Art in a Political World: Alma Thomas in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s,” in *Alma W. Thomas, A Retrospective of the Paintings*, exh cat. (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), 61.

creates a quiet resting place for the eye before it is thrust back and forth from the center to the outer part of the circle. As with her other “Alma stripes” paintings, Thomas allowed the white of the canvas to trickle through her shapes, creating dynamism and flickering across the surface.

It was during this period of her career that she established her artistic position within the world of nonfigurative art, depicting the essence of a scene instead of being bound by the need to portray it in a precise and exact manner. Thomas depicted the mood or idea of a setting, as indicated by the title. The paintings she produced during this period maintained her interest in representational scenes, and were inspired by sites Thomas viewed. In this iconic, defining style, Thomas simultaneously expressed and developed her interest in the formal properties of painting—color, paint application, and of utmost importance for this artist, the ways colors relate to one another.

Thomas’s final period started in 1972, and lasted until the end of her life, in 1978. During this time, her works are characterized by three elements. The paintings are more atmospheric and defined by a single layer of color with a multicolored background. She also simplified her forms, using shapes and a format similar in style to Barnett Newman. *Cherry Blossom Symphony* (1972) illustrates these two tendencies (figure 23). The all-over application of pink paint is interspersed with small strokes of blue and black dashes across the canvas. The left one-third and the outermost right portion of the canvas assert her interest in vertical stripes comprised of hyphenated forms, though in this picture, the single use of pink has a calming effect only to be energized by the variations on brushstroke orientation.

The central part of the canvas contrasts with its outer areas in that it has a horizontal format. Thomas's decision to subtly contrast all pink verticals with horizontals creates motion wherein the right part of the painting seems to move towards and thus be consumed by, the left most vertical lines. Enhancing this effect is the more densely populated and darker left side contrasting with the sparser and thus lighter right portion of the canvas.

And finally, her works became more mosaic-like, in which they appear to be shards applied to the canvas, rather than dabs of color. In *Babbling Brook and Whistling Poplar Trees Symphony* (1976) (figure 24), Thomas limited her palette to midnight blue and white, and created all-over mosaic-shaped forms across the composition. She varied the distance between shapes, in which the left most portion reveals little space, with distance between shapes loosening in the middle and toward the right part of the surface. The result of her monochromatic palette and alternating between high congestion and select areas of distance is a highly dramatic viewing experience in which the viewer's eye is led around the canvas in a circular motion. Areas of dense shape and frenzied activity blend, only to be met by the relaxed motion in viewing the more evenly spaced application of form.

Throughout her late career, Thomas received various accolades for her artistic achievements. For example, in 1975, she was presented with Howard University's Alumni of Achievement Award at the Charter Day Convocation. The following year, the Longview Foundation donated Thomas's 1972 painting, *Red Rose Sonata* to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In 1977, at the invitation of President Jimmy Carter, Thomas visited the White House.

In February of 1978, Alma W. Thomas died after aortal surgery at Howard University. She was 86. Art critic Benjamin Forgey asserts, “She died at the peak of her career.”²⁹⁹

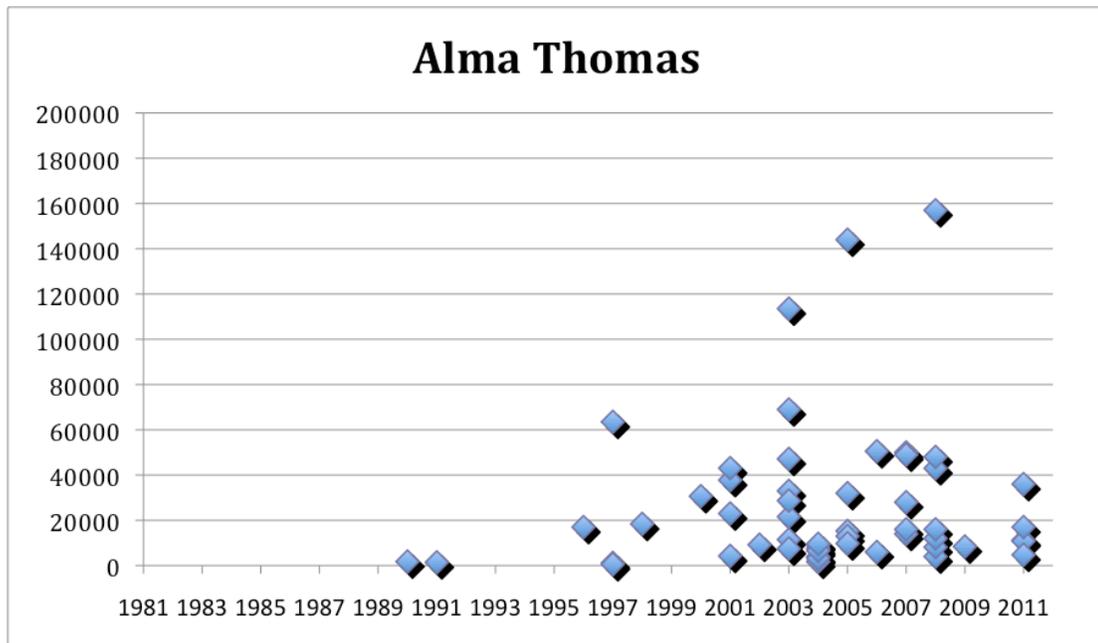
Auction Performance of a ‘Polite and Courteous’ Woman

Thomas’s biography served as a significant factor in the construction and reception of Thomas as artist. Her auction market performance is an effective gauge of how social forces and perceptions impacted her reception and career. Chapters seven and eight include in-depth analysis of the connection between biography and reception.

Alma Thomas has had 60 works placed on the auction block since the early 1980s, 88% of which have sold. Her highest auction price was achieved in May of 2008, with a sale price of \$157,000 at Christie’s Auction House in New York.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Forgey, “Alma W. Thomas Dies,” A-7.

³⁰⁰ See “Auction Records for Alma Thomas,” *AskArt: The Artists’ Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORDS&artist=30109.



Thomas’s auction data reveals that her work did not regularly sell until the late 1990s, a period in which the value of her works increased. However, her sales volume is scant compared to Frankenthaler and Tobey. Furthermore, her three highest selling works are outliers, with the vast majority of her output selling under the \$80,000 mark.

In looking at Thomas’s and Norman Lewis’s combined market data, one may observe no market for these African American artists until the late 1980s in the United States. Even today, their performance does not compare to their white counterparts, as Frankenthaler and Tobey far outnumber Thomas in terms of the number and monetary value of sales. In fact, Thomas’s sales are a small fraction of Frankenthaler’s and Tobey’s. Finally, Thomas’s auction data reveals interest in the artist primarily by auction houses in the Washington, DC, area, with small amounts of

demand from key New York markets as evidenced by the limited sales through Christie's, Sotheby's, and Phillips de Pury & Company.

Chapter 6: Mark Tobey: The ‘Universal,’ ‘Mysterious’ Legend

Life Overview

Mark George Tobey was the first painter of the ‘Northwest School’ and first prize awardee in the prestigious 1948 Venice Biennale, the first American since James Abbott McNeill Whistler to receive the award. Of his colleague, Norman Lewis noted, “I have known him about 20 years and this was a rich environment . . . The artists were almost like a stable of horses, the artists that Marion [Willard] had. These were people, like Mark Tobey, being older, what they felt as human beings they shared with you. Tobey stooped to stimulate and his importance was never so opulent that he couldn’t become meek [sic].”³⁰¹

As accessible as Tobey may have been despite his fame, critics and art historians nevertheless labeled him an independent, ‘mysterious’ figure, “a legend”³⁰² and “one of the ‘old masters’ of American modern art.”³⁰³ For example, art historian Wieland Schmied begins his 1959 book on Tobey by asserting, “What do we know of Mark Tobey? He has already become a legend, a fabled figure of modern painting, a myth. He has been called ‘the sage from Seattle,’ ‘the sage from Wisconsin,’ ‘a wandering mystic.’ All kinds of nebulous terms have been used in an effort to define his character and the meaning of his works.”³⁰⁴ Further, Schmied emphasizes Tobey’s renown, explaining, “A Pacific School of painting has even been discovered,

³⁰¹ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis,” interview by Henri Ghent, July 20, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lewis68.htm>.

³⁰² Wieland Schmied, *Tobey* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959), 5.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, back cover.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

a Northwestern School of the New American Painting, with Tobey at its head. Such a school has never really existed, but the term underscored the extent of his influence and its enduring quality.”³⁰⁵

Tobey was born in Centerville, Wisconsin, in 1890. The youngest of four children, he was the son of George Baker Tobey, a farmer and carpenter, and Emma Jane Tobey. As Congregationalists, George and Emma required their children to regularly attend church and Sunday school. The Tobey family moved several times during Tobey’s childhood, from Centerville, Wisconsin, to Jacksonville, Tennessee, where George Tobey hoped to start a sugarcane plantation. The family quickly relocated, however, due to the fact that Jacksonville lacked educational facilities for the children. Next, the Tobeyes moved to Trempealeau, Wisconsin, in 1894, where they remained for the majority of Tobey’s childhood, not moving again until 1906. In this small village town of 600 on the Mississippi River, he attended the local school and enjoyed a range of outdoor activities including swimming, fishing, and playing in the woods. This Midwestern town provided a quiet, richly fulfilling environment for the young Tobey, and material in the form of childhood recollections for later paintings.³⁰⁶ While art was not part of the Jacksonville school curriculum, Tobey nevertheless discovered opportunities to hone his skills at a young age. For example, he was the blackboard illustrator for his, and other, grades in school.³⁰⁷ Additionally, George Tobey encouraged his son’s artistic sensibility. Art historian William Seitz

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 5.

³⁰⁷ William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 89.

explains, “one of Tobey’s early memories is of a new pair of scissors, and of the desire to cut out monkey’s and other animals that his father drew in a ‘circular’ style. George Tobey also carved animals from the red stone that the Indians of the region used for peace pipes.”³⁰⁸

The family moved again in 1906, when Tobey was 16, and he attended high school in Hammond, Indiana. Although his performance in school was uneven, Tobey demonstrated a deep interest in nature study and zoology, and became fascinated with art, even though the subject was not taught in school. It was during these years that Tobey traveled each week to Chicago, upon the prompting of his father, to take a total of eight classes at the Art Institute of Chicago. He was especially interested in oil painting and watercolor.³⁰⁹

In 1909 the Tobey family relocated yet again, this time to Chicago, Illinois. However, while seemingly ideal for Tobey, as closer proximity to the Art Institute could make learning new skills and honing developed techniques more accessible, his father fell ill, thereby forcing Tobey to abandon his studies, including high school and art classes, in order to find a job and help support his family. He attempted to emulate his older brother Leon in seeking employment as a technical draftsman at Northern Steel Works; however, Tobey was hired as a ‘blueprint boy.’ Alas, this position was short-lived, and Tobey was soon fired.³¹⁰ In fact, he was unsuccessful in developing a range of professions, including employment as a letterer in the art

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 89.

³⁰⁹ Schmied, *Tobey*, 5.

³¹⁰ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 89.

department at Barnes Crosby Engraving Co., until an independent fashion design studio eventually hired him as an ‘errand boy.’³¹¹ Ironically, this place of employment reestablished Tobey’s interest in art, and he became particularly engrossed in drawing and fashion illustrating.³¹²

Blackboard Drawings in the Midwest

Recognized for his talent for drawing faces, Tobey was afforded the opportunity to work in catalogue illustrations, a job that came with steadily increasing pay raises.³¹³ Furthermore, the design studio enabled Tobey to develop his taste in art, and he studied Italian Renaissance artists in addition to various commercial artists and the Art Noveau movement.³¹⁴ So involved with emulating established artists that William Seitz explains, “A senior fashion artist throws some reproductions of Raphael, Rembrandt, and Michelangelo on Tobey’s drawing table with the questions, ‘Why don’t you paint something out of your own noodle? Why be a monkey?’”³¹⁵ Tobey also continued to frequent the Art Institute of Chicago and he visited bookstores to review art productions.³¹⁶

In 1911, Tobey moved to New York, to pursue a career as a fashion artist. He lived in Greenwich Village, in an apartment below art critic and philosopher Holger

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Schmied, *Tobey*, 5.

³¹³ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 89.

³¹⁴ Schmied, *Tobey*, 5.

³¹⁵ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 89.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Cahill, and worked as a fashion illustrator for *McCall's*.³¹⁷ However, the artist moved back to Chicago the following year, continuing his work as a fashion artist. Tobey maintained this New York-Chicago lifestyle for many years, and between 1913 and 1917, he moved back and forth between the two cities, studying art and producing charcoal portraits.³¹⁸ It was this ability to create in-demand portraits that allowed Tobey access to influential, wealthy clientele.³¹⁹ Although he was such an adept portraitist that the gallery Knoedler & Company gave him a one-person exhibition in 1917, Tobey abandoned this subject matter as quickly as he adopted it. In pursuit of artistic freedom and out of a desire to focus on design work, he explored a range of representational subjects in subsequent years, from caricatures to drawings of dancers, vaudeville performers, and prostitutes.

Exploring Art and Religion

A chance event in 1918 changed the course of Tobey's life in every respect, including his spiritual path, personal choices, and his art. When the artist posed for Juliet Thompson, a painter, Thompson introduced Tobey to the Baha'i World Faith, "a creed of religious universalism with an optimistic outlook," in the words of Schmied, who asserts that Tobey "became a convert"³²⁰ after visiting a Baha'i camp in Maine.³²¹ This religious commitment was a factor that later enhanced Tobey's

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Schmied, *Tobey*, 5.

³¹⁹ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 90.

³²⁰ Schmied, *Tobey*, 78.

³²¹ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 90.

reputation as a ‘mystical’ figure capable of painting works of ‘universal’ appeal. Further, critics and scholars recognized the influence of Tobey’s interest in Baha’i and Asian culture on his painting style and technique.³²²

The whirlwind years of 1918 to 1922 presented Tobey with a host of opportunities and disappointments. He established his prominent artistic reputation, marked by his early portraits appearing in the *New York Times*; was briefly married for one year; visited with Marcel Duchamp, the premier avant-garde artist of the time; expressed his interest in vaudeville dance when he painted dancers in Harlem; and eventually, in 1923 moved to Seattle to teach art.³²³ Tobey learned about Chinese brushwork in the 1920s, and traveled around Europe and the Middle East, all the while developing his artistic outlook and personal worldview. Seitz explains that in 1919-1920, Tobey “reacts against the ‘Renaissance sense of space and order,’ and against sculptural form, moved by ‘a violent desire to break and disintegrate forms and to use light structures rather than dark.’”³²⁴ He began incorporating small forms into his works. Having adopted the viewpoints of the Baha’i World Faith around 1918, Tobey’s style also became intricately connected to this religion. He combined his passion for art making with his knowledge of Baha’i, deeply infusing his faith with his artistic output after 1920, even painting various explicit religious themes.³²⁵

In sum, Tobey combined his beliefs with stylistic trends, to create his distinct artistic vision. Art historian Lucretia Giese explains, “His art seems . . . a unique

³²² I discuss these ideas in more detail later in this chapter, as well as in chapter seven.

³²³ Schmied, *Tobey*, 78.

³²⁴ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 93.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

joining of three primary stimuli: nature, the Baha'i faith . . . and Oriental art. These forces, in a curious way, built upon one another, being renewed at different times in Tobey's life. Until his own direction was established, Tobey did not use these sources in a pure state but in conjunction with artistic ideas . . . notably Cubism, Futurism, and Surrealism, as well as less avant-garde styles."³²⁶

During this period, Tobey taught painting at the progressive Cornish School of Art, Dance, Theater, and Music, in Seattle. He continued this work intermittently for many years, supporting himself financially and contributing to an environment in which he could regularly interact with likeminded individuals. Seitz asserts that the position allowed Tobey to put into practice St. Augustine's saying, "We learn to do by doing."³²⁷ While at Cornish, Tobey developed his personal style, and artistic outlook, interpreting cubism, for example, through his own, artistic lens.

Tobey studied major modern artists such as Cezanne, Braque, and Picasso, but modified their approach to art to align with his personal artistic outlook. For example, he carefully researched cubism, only to realize the importance of discovering its precepts on his own. According to Seitz,

One result of this research was what Tobey now calls his 'personal discovery of cubism.' One night at the Cornish School he pictured himself, in his mind, working in a small centrally illuminated room. Within this compartment a portrait on an easel before him formed a second smaller compartment of space. Next he imagined a fly moving freely around him and the objects in the room. It was able to move up or down, and in any other direction. As the path of movement crossed and recrossed around the central axis, it generated a complex of line, and by its many crossings, imaginary planes and shapes. Although related to the objects in the room,

³²⁶ Lucretia H. Giese, "Mark Tobey's 1939 Murals for the John A. Baillargeons: A Transition," *Archives of American Art Journal* 23, no. 2 (1983): 5.

³²⁷ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 91.

this secondary matrix of form was independent of them, and was entirely the product of movement.³²⁸

By reconfiguring cubism through his artistic lens, Tobey personally connected with the movement. He then envisioned the ways he could integrate its key components into his idiom. In fact, Seitz asserts that Tobey's cubism joined spirituality and art. He argues, "His cubism was a major step toward the ultimate interpenetration of mass and void. Afterward he could see solid objects . . . as transparent and metaphysical."³²⁹ Thus the effect of his religious exploration and artistic development were intimately interconnected throughout Tobey's career, and affected how the artist approached art theory, concepts, subjects, and form.

Shortly after the commencement of his work at Cornish, Tobey had another chance encounter that broadened his artistic perspective. In 1923, he met a Chinese art student, Teng Kuei, who was studying at the University of Washington, and who introduced Tobey to Chinese brushstroke.³³⁰ Through a Chinese calligraphic technique, he fused many of his personal, professional, and artistic dimensions, as he was interested in Asian culture and religion.

After Tobey met Teng Kuei, the various pieces of his life puzzle started to fit together. The artist asserted, "All is in motion now. A design of flames encircles the quiet Buddha. One step backward into the past and the tree in front of my studio in Seattle is all rhythm, lifting, springing upward."³³¹ Reflecting on his initial exposure

³²⁸ Ibid., 46-7.

³²⁹ Ibid., 47.

³³⁰ Ibid., 91.

³³¹ Ibid., 47.

to Chinese brushstroke, Tobey expressed a sense of relief at having discovered an artistic vehicle for his expression. He explained, “I have just had my first lesson in Chinese brush from my friend and artist Teng Kuei. The tree is no more a solid in the earth, breaking into lesser solids bathed in chiaroscuro. There is pressure and release. Each movement, like tracks in the snow, is recorded and often loved for itself. The Great Dragon is breathing sky, thunder, and shadow; wisdom and spirit vitalized.”³³² In fact, this artistic method provided a technique for Tobey to give visual form, density, and volume to his artistic ideas.³³³

Tobey’s artistic development challenged Renaissance conventions of perspective. Interested in honing an idiom in which he could express himself in ways outside of these conventions, Seitz explains, “During a visit in New York, Teng Kuei asks Tobey, as they look at a goldfish tank in a restaurant window, why Western artists paint fish only when they are dead, and why Western paintings resemble holes in the wall. This further undermines Renaissance concepts in Tobey’s eyes.”³³⁴

The year 1925 marked the beginning of a lifetime of international travel for Tobey; he ventured across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Mexico and the United States, eventually settling in Basel, Switzerland, in 1960. Throughout these decades, he lived for periods of one to two years in Seattle, but divided his time between New York, Chicago, Seattle, and Europe. Furthermore, these experiences enhanced Tobey’s artistic vision, as he regularly visited new places and refreshed his

³³² Ibid..

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid., 91.

viewpoints, and met a scattering of individuals including art collectors and artists. For example, his travels in 1931 to Mexico led to his encounter with dancer and choreographer Martha Graham, artist Marsden Hartley, and René d'Harnoncourt, host of the radio program "Art in America" and who would later become the director of the Museum of Modern Art.³³⁵

Perhaps just as critical, Tobey's travels enabled the artist to further develop his Baha'i faith by visiting shrines across the Middle East and Asia. These pilgrimages lasted throughout his lifetime, with journeys in 1926, for instance, to the tombs of Baha'u'llah in 'Akka and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa.³³⁶ On this pilgrimage to Haifa, various Persian and Arabic scripts influenced him.³³⁷ And in 1934, on a leave of study from Dartington Hall, a progressive school in England where Tobey taught from 1931-1938, he went on a trip to Asia with friends and then traveled alone to Japan, where he authored poetry, studied calligraphy, painted, and meditated at a Zen monastery in Kyoto.³³⁸

The year 1935 was significant in Tobey's stylistic development, and marked the start of his most defining idiom. He painted pictures that combined much of his East-West experience, and commenced the style known as "white writing."³³⁹ This mode of painting was marked by the use of fine white lines sewn across the canvas, interlocking and overlaid. While Tobey's interest in "white writing" demonstrated

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid. 92.

³³⁹ Ibid.

his focus on line and form, simultaneous to this development, however, was Tobey's continued incorporation of subject matter drawn from his real world experiences, particularly of modern cities. These sights, sounds, and observations of city life coalesce in *Broadway* (1935-36) (figure 25). Tobey used a varied yet subdued palette of white, rust red, blue, green, brown and hints of yellow. He created a busy, dizzying scene of white, interlocking fine lines woven together to suggest a central building-lined avenue filled with eye-popping speed. The viewer's vantage point is in the center of the image, with depth created through orthogonals (demonstrating his early interest in the Italian Renaissance) in the form of breaks in the white scribbles that lead the eye into the picture, met with the central yellow pop of color.

Art historian and critic Michael Fried describes Tobey's artistic output, and poignantly clarifies his interpretation of works such as *Broadway*. Fried writes, "To my way of looking Tobey is chiefly a draftsman in paint whose excruciation for at least the ten years 1935-45 was to devise a notation adequate to his experience of New York and other American cities."³⁴⁰ Fried continues, commenting on Tobey's format, noting, "Moreover, Tobey seems to have been especially struck by the feel of New York at night, and in order to get this down it was natural for him to work in white on a black or dark field, to ignore mass (which would be invisible against the dark) and to concentrate entirely on light and outline."³⁴¹ Indeed, a black and white palette would have been instrumental for conveying the experience of a nocturnal New York City. This utilization of pared down paints allowed the artist to focus on

³⁴⁰ Michael Fried, "White Writing and Pop Art," *Arts Magazine* 36, no. 7 (April 1962): 26.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

form and script, while still conveying the feeling of the limited views prevalent at night. However, he painted *Broadway* as a memory of New York, when he was in Devonshire. This distance, both literal and figurative, enabled Tobey to best express the essence of the scene, without the interruption of unnecessary details. Tobey explained, “Of course when I did *Broadway* I did it because I loved it, because I had experienced it. It was in my bones, but I could paint it best when I was farthest from it.”³⁴²

Tobey’s increasing utilization of line to determine shape and form in his paintings is evident in the years following *Broadway*. Additionally, he did away with reliance on clear vantage point, producing images that simultaneously create and deny depth, are flat, and make use of every inch of the canvas or paper. For example, *Broadway Boogie* of 1942, another tempera work, demonstrates this lessening of perspective, and increasing all-over utilization (figure 26). Retaining his subdued palette—here of pale browns and greens, and white—as well as his focus on the vivacity of New York City, Tobey painted a picture of fine, pulsating white lines and small shapes that dominate the upper three-quarters of the paper, with the bottom quarter reserved for decadently rounded figures and faces. Although the onlooker cannot determine locale based on the paint alone, the rhythmic, loose strokes of paint interlock and interact to convey the energy of New York.

Drift of Summer (1942) represents the epitome of Tobey’s famed “white writing” style (figure 27). Here, the surface is densely covered with fine, white, sketched lines jutting back and forth, and correlating to the appearance of thinly

³⁴² Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 16.

applied ink drawing. The artist contrasted these thin forms with miniscule, less concentrated lines across the left-most portion of the surface, forming a vertical line with its deep black background. The all-over application of tempera paint to the surface of this paper and the manner of thinly sketched white paint against the dark background in *Drift of Summer* makes visual the breeze as it whips through thin tree branches. Instead of including the entire tree, or other aspects of such a scene, though, Tobey concentrated on making visual that which cannot be seen. Thus although one cannot view the breeze itself, one can see the effect it has on natural form, and by implication, therefore, the wind.

Simultaneous to his creation of the nonfigurative work, *Drift of Summer*, Tobey painted *Remembrance in Light* (1942) (figure 28). In this tempera painting, he continued to utilize the small, thin white lines; however, in this picture, the lines combine to create a bust portrait. Tobey depicted a frontal figure, wearing a cap, jacket, and shirt, centrally positioned, and looking directly out of the picture plane. Of the picture, Seitz notes, “There are many attempts to adjust calligraphic line to large figures: using loose brush drawing, a proletarian subject takes powerful but poetic form in *Worker* . . . delicate ‘white writing’ flattens plasticity in *Remembrance in Light*.”³⁴³ This tightly controlled, heavily outlined form is composed of strict, straight lines and tight circles. Tobey created depth in the image by developing a background composed of a white, loose, charcoal-like application of paint to the upper half of the picture, so that the strict form of the figure appears to emerge from the loosely formed background space.

³⁴³ Ibid., 35.

Gaining Acceptance and Access

Success was rapid for this untrained artist; he enjoyed his first solo exhibition of portraits at Knoedler & Company in New York in 1917. His subjects were an elite group of individuals, such as his patroness, Mary Garden, Muriel Draper, and Jacques Copeau.³⁴⁴ However, as previously mentioned, after this showing, Tobey temporarily abandoned the practice of portrait painting, opting instead to work in interior decoration. Schmied asserts that interior decoration provided “more freedom” for the artist.³⁴⁵ He was given the commission of painting the walls, lamps, and screens of Edna Woolman Chase’s apartment, upon the urging of Wymer Mills, a *Vogue* writer and antiques buyer for Wanamaker’s.³⁴⁶

Tobey’s breakthrough exhibition occurred in 1929. In December of that year, his work was exhibited in a solo show at Romany Marie’s Café Gallery. It was here that Alfred H. Barr, the newly appointed director of New York’s Museum of Modern Art, viewed the paintings, and selected several to include in the important exhibition *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans* at MoMA. Tobey’s role as a major artistic influence for aspiring artists was cemented in 1930, the year in which he was invited to teach at Dartington Hall, a progressive school in Devonshire, England, a position he accepted and kept for seven years. There, he met influential intellectuals such as Pearl S. Buck, the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (1938), writer Aldous Huxley, and painter, playwright and poet

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.

³⁴⁵ Schmied, *Tobey*, 78.

³⁴⁶ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 90.

Rabindranath Tagore.³⁴⁷ Tobey's success was followed by his first solo museum exhibition in 1935 at the Seattle Art Museum.

In 1938, Tobey left Dartington Hall for a brief trip to the United States. However, due to World War II, he was unable to return to Europe, so he moved to Seattle, worked for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, taught in his studio, and honed his white writing painting technique.³⁴⁸ A writer and friend, Nancy Wilson Ross, introduced Tobey to art dealer Marian Willard in 1939, who eventually became Tobey's New York art dealer, and who bought *Broadway* from the artist. Three years later the dealer entered the painting into the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition, *Artists for Victory*, winning a \$500 purchase prize, and gaining fame for the artist.³⁴⁹

Tobey's first solo exhibition at Willard occurred in 1944, cementing the artist's "national reputation."³⁵⁰ From that point forward, Tobey was included in major exhibitions around the world and garnered numerous awards, including the important show *Fourteen Americans* at MoMA in 1946; the *American Vanguard* exhibition at the Galerie de France in Paris; an exhibition prepared by Sidney Janis; a solo show in 1954 at the Otto Seligman Gallery in Sweden (Seligman then became Tobey's exclusive Seattle art dealer); and a 1955 solo exhibition at the Galerie Jeanne

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 91.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 92.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

This attention stands in stark contrast to Lewis's gallery experience, and demonstrates the power of influential members of the art world, such as gallery owners.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

Bucher in Paris, France. Additionally, he represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1948 and was the subject of a 1952 film, *Mark Tobey: Artist*.³⁵¹ Tobey's accolades continued thereafter, with a Guggenheim International Award in 1956; the American Institute of Architects Fine Arts Metal in 1957; and the Seattle City Council Resolution of Civic Appreciation, to name a few.³⁵²

Artistically, *Written Over the Plains*, 1950, reflects his interests during this period, which were validated by the various factions of the art world (figure 29). It is a painting in which Tobey retains his regular use of muted tones, including white, reds, blues, ocean green, and black, against a pale gray-blue background. Here, he loosened his tightly composed "white writing" forms from the previous period, but maintained the curving forms, dominant use of white line, and all-over composition. The image displays a perspectival void, and depth is only the result of the application of white paint to a darker background. The scrawls, marks, and curvy lines appear randomly positioned, but at the same time because of the carefully placed circles around the canvas which balance the work, the viewer may feel compelled to associate the forms with ideas. Thus what at first glance appears to be painted scrawls fades into a propensity or search for deeper meaning after careful examination.

Tobey's *Meditative Series VIII* of 1954 exhibits an all-over application of thin white lines against a greenish-brown and salmon pink background (figure 30). The densely formed central lines loosen towards the work's edges, where areas free from

³⁵¹ Ibid., 93.

³⁵² Ibid., 93-94.

white line are dominated by background colors in which a loose application of paint is visible. The primary white line absorbs and is absorbed by the background colors, forming a dialogue between form and color, background and foreground, center and edge. The salmon paint forms a wide central, vertical band, surrounded by deep greens and browns, all under the white lines. The background appears to struggle to free itself from the confines of white line. This tension creates intensity and gestural expression.

Space Ritual # 4 of 1957 exemplifies Tobey's interest in line and brushstroke, and more specifically, the Japanese ink style called sumi painting (figure 31).³⁵³ Here Tobey pared down the content of the brush and ink on paper work, so that the composition is primarily composed of two blotches of ink, which balance one another. He maintained a simple white background so that the black ink makes a bold and intense impression. The stabilizing force of the work is in the form of a black paint mark thickly applied in a curved, vertical shape at the bottom, right part of the canvas. This anchor enabled the artist to then splatter a large mass of ink in the center and left central portion of the paper, loosening in density as it moves from center to left edge. The viewer's eye is led back and forth between the two solid black masses, occasionally veering off to the loosening form emanating leftward from the central block. The simplicity of form and pared down palette force the viewer to notice the subtle paint effects, such as the dots and splatters that radiate from the dominant masses. The eye rests on the solidity of black mass and white open form, only to be met again with subtle and intense movement from the primary forms.

³⁵³ Schmied, *Tobey*, 81.

Homage to Rameau, 1960, represents Tobey's utilization of a brighter palette, also present in several works produced in his later career (figure 32). Although this painting is comprised of blue, black, and white, the concentrated royal blue, and its heavy use, leads to an intense color creation. Outlined by the black framing element of the paper, Tobey loosely painted royal blue all over the canvas, forming a rectangle. In the center of this area are curving black and white lines that mix and intermingle, and appear to dance across the center of the canvas. The centermost, curved lines are dominated by white, loosening to black, lines moving away from the picture's core. This crowded, dense central element is stabilized by the all-over blue composition, and reinforced by the black framing component. The eye is both led towards the frantic movement of the curving lines, and pulled out to the painting's edge.

Around the time he created *Homage to Rameau*, in 1960, Tobey settled in Basel, Switzerland, with partner Pehr Hallsten, and his secretary, Mark Ritter. This aspect of Tobey's personal life—his sexuality—is rarely acknowledged in critical writing and art historical literature on the artist. In recent years, Tobey's homosexuality has been documented, as art historians seek to comprehensively analyze this artist and situate him in a more encompassing context. I discuss the nuanced effect of his sexuality on his broad appeal within the art world in chapter eight. However, it is worth noting here that Tobey, though highly regarded and respected within the arts community, never received the level of critical renown reserved for other major mid-century artists.³⁵⁴ And part of these artists' appeal to

³⁵⁴ Critics observed this neglect, evidenced by William Wilson, for instance, who titled his 1967 article, "Tobey — Victim of Neglect." Wilson asserted, "Everyone knows this outstanding painter is

critics was the rough mystique and rugged exterior that surrounded their biography and very physical art making.³⁵⁵ Tobey's homosexuality may have been a complicating factor in his biography for critics, as he was highly esteemed but never centrally positioned in the canon of great artists. Critics omitted overt reference to his sexuality in Tobey's biography, but its exclusion and the absence of his romantic life in general in critical discourse suggests a possible discomfort with his lifestyle.

After 1960, Tobey regularly returned to New York and Seattle, and was featured in exhibitions around Europe and the United States. He exhibited his work in retrospective shows in 1961 and 1962, at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.³⁵⁶ Tobey continued to have retrospective exhibitions throughout the latter part of the 1960s, at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in 1968 and the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, in 1974. He died in April of 1976, in Basel.

During his lifetime, and after his death, a limited number of critics particularly valorized Tobey as an artist and his creations, especially lauding the 'white writing' series of paintings in the mid-1930s to mid-1940s. Though the reception of Tobey

neglected . . . Tobey, at 77, is the most famous neglected painter in the world." William Wilson, "Tobey — Victim of Neglect," *L.A. Times*, January 7, 1967, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The critic concluded that the reason for such neglect is critics' tendency to conflate the time in which he worked with that of the Abstract Expressionists. Rather, Wilson explained, he preceded this period: "I think that the mistake we make in evaluating Tobey's art is in placing it too late in time. He began to be noticed at about the time of the Abstract Expressionists, his art is rather a forerunner of theirs." Ibid.

³⁵⁵ For example, writing about Jackson Pollock, Ann Gibson proclaims, "His public persona was that of a violent, savage romantic who painted explosive, incomprehensible, but profoundly original pictures; his western origins were often invoked to explain his Herculean bravado, and to claim an American rhythm for his raw approach." Ann Gibson, "Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock," *Artforum* 30, no. 7 (March 1992): 69.

³⁵⁶ Schmied, *Tobey*, 81.

has not been as extensive as that of Frankenthaler, leading some critics (and academics) to insist that he deserves more critical attention, powerful critics have voiced their approval of Tobey's idiom. For example, Clement Greenberg included Tobey in his influential 1955 essay, "'American-Type' Painting," in which the critic hailed Abstract Expressionists and the all-over painting format, and noted that Tobey was the first to paint in this format.³⁵⁷ Critic Henry McBride asserted that Tobey's work was "timeless."³⁵⁸ Michael Fried even qualified his own ability to assess Tobey's works after reviewing the artist's post-1945 paintings with less enthusiasm than the 1935-1945 output, declaring, "I favor the way verbal elements were used in the early work, imaginatively but with an internal rationale . . . This may represent a failure on my part, but I feel more disarmed than anything else when confronted with, say, Tobey's adaptation of 'grass-writing': that is, I know just enough about Chinese and Japanese art to know that I'm unable to judge it in the terms it cries out for."³⁵⁹ This reception illustrates influential critics' support for his varied output throughout his career. Such approval was integral to Tobey's success within the art world.

³⁵⁷ See Clement Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," *Partisan Review* 22 (Spring 1955): 176-96, reprinted in Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961, 1989), 208-229.

This particular criticism both supported Tobey's influential position, and reiterated his position on the periphery of major mid-century art movements, by casting him as an elder, prominent artist whose work guided and inspired younger artists.

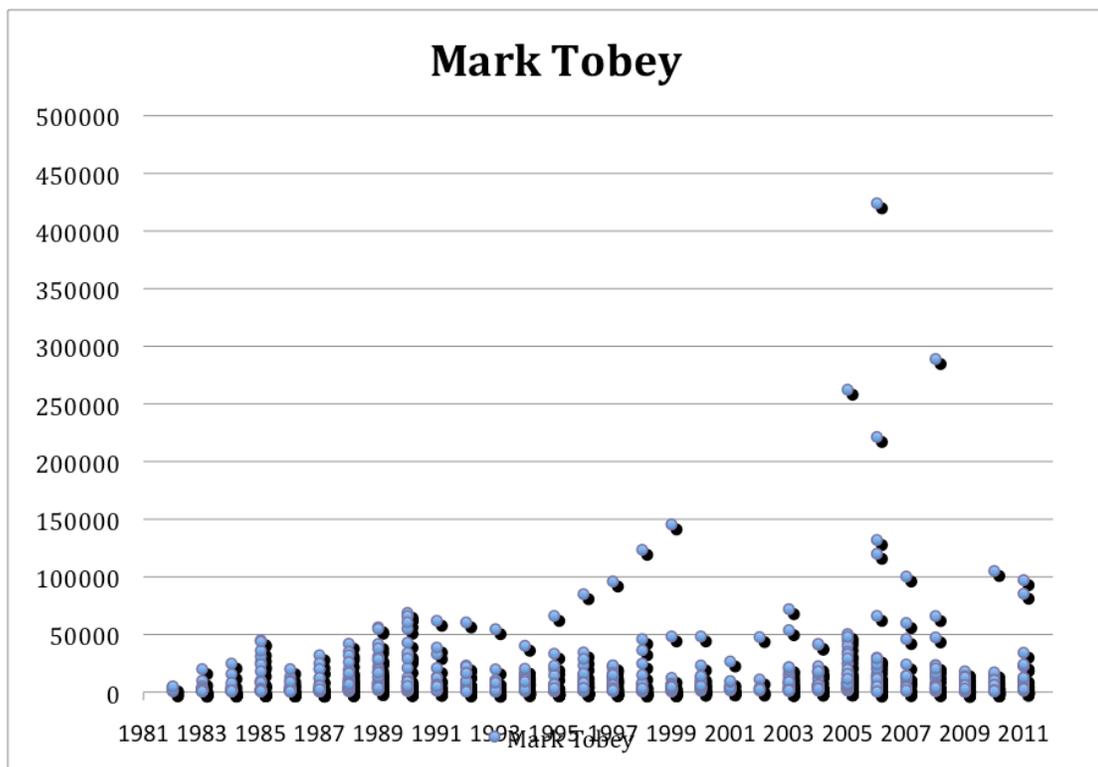
³⁵⁸ Henry McBride, "Abstract Report for April, Three Americans: DeKooning, Tobey, Tomlin, Two Europeans: Manessier, Sutherland," *Art News* 52, no. 2 (April 1953): 18.

³⁵⁹ Fried, "White Writing and Pop Art," 26.

Auction Performance Worthy of a Sage

Tobey’s market performance reveals intriguing results. Incorporation of his auction sales history into this examination is essential to analyzing how social forces affected his career and the impact of his biography on this aspect of his reception. The auction market thus shows how the various art world entities and the public responded to his life and output in numerical terms.

Mark Tobey has had 982 works placed on the auction block since the early 1980s, 78% of which have sold. His highest auction price was achieved in February of 2006, with a sale price of \$424,070.³⁶⁰



³⁶⁰ See “Auction Records for Mark Tobey,” *AskArt: The Artists’ Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORD&artist=30110.

Tobey's heavy sales data demonstrates the market's decisive interest in his work.³⁶¹ As evidenced by the graph above, the sales of his works have remained stable. The sheer volume of Tobey's sales, equally spread across the periods, reveals the robust and continued market interest in his output. While his works do not sell for as much as Frankenthaler's, the fact that he worked primarily on paper, and she on canvas, must be considered. Finally, Tobey's auction sales data confirms both the national and international market appeal of this artist, evidenced by sales in influential national and international auction houses (see Appendix 1).

³⁶¹ This study has not discounted the fact that Tobey's sales are primarily works on paper, as this artist worked mostly in this format.

Chapter 7: Race in the Reception of Nonfigurative Painting

The Social Construction of Race

Race has been a salient feature in western history.³⁶² The interpretation of racial distinctions has permeated society, determining how individuals of all races understand themselves and one another. Martin Berger asserts, “Race emerged in early modern Europe to mark an imagined divide between Christian Europeans and the Jewish and African populations in their midst.”³⁶³ Thus, during its infancy, Berger declares, “racial thought” was linked most directly to “the presence of nonwhites.”³⁶⁴ However, he explains, “By the later nineteenth century . . . the exclusive links between race and nonwhites had been conceptually dissolved, allowing European-Americans to think ‘racially’ without needing a nonwhite presence to activate such patterns of thought.”³⁶⁵ Although the artists studied in this dissertation created nonfigurative paintings, their output was nevertheless interpreted within an overt or subtle racial context. This chapter analyzes the ways in which race influenced these artists’ critical reception. It ascertains that Norman Lewis and Alma Thomas have been historically and explicitly received through the lens of race, whereas critics generally imply a racial subtext in their descriptions of Frankenthaler and Tobey, thereby treating their whiteness as a normative standard. As such, much of the critical and scholarly writing on these artists incorporates changing

³⁶² See footnote 14, in Chapter 1, for sources on the social construction of race.

³⁶³ Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 173.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

understandings, stereotypes, and conceptions of race and race relations in twentieth-century America. While race-based interpretations thus affected the reception of all of these artists, critics' use of direct and overt language in describing Lewis and Thomas allows for a clear tracing of race-based concerns. Implied racial concern in the critical reception of Frankenthaler and Tobey requires increased conjecture and deduction. Lewis and Thomas therefore comprise the primary focus of this chapter.

Maurice Berger discusses the centrality of aspects of race within art reception. He argues, "Despite the recent increase in exhibitions devoted to African-American art in major museums, these shows rarely address the underlying resistance of the art world to people of color. Such exhibitions often fall into what the art historian Judith Wilson has called the syndrome of 'separate but unequal programming': African-American shows in February, during Black History month, white shows the rest of the year."³⁶⁶ This lack of recognition and publicity, and the allocation of certain exhibitions during limited periods indicates that the art world insistently merges the work of African American artists with their biography. Furthermore, the art world relegates the creations of African American artists to the margins of art history and suggests to the American public that there is only so much room in the American consciousness for a variety of artists from many backgrounds and with distinctive perspectives.

In this chapter, I assert that race is socially and culturally constructed. I address how critics assume Mark Tobey's whiteness in their criticism, positioning him as representative of a universal consciousness and thereby capable of conveying

³⁶⁶ Maurice Berger, *How Art Becomes History: Essays on Art, Society, and Culture in Post-New Deal America* (New York: Perennial, 1993), 146.

a mystical and spiritual romanticism in his nonfigurative paintings.³⁶⁷ To a certain extent, critics presume Helen Frankenthaler's race as well, though her status as a Jewish American woman complicates this reception. Although not referring to Frankenthaler directly, American Studies professor Ruth Frankenberg's points about whiteness are relevant. She explains, "In the same way that both men's and women's lives are shaped by their gender, and that both heterosexual and lesbian women's experiences in the world are marked by their sexuality, white people *and* people of color live racially structured lives. In other words, any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses."³⁶⁸ Indeed, Frankenthaler and Tobey's lives were shaped by their experiences as white Americans, from their treatment in their communities, to the ways in which they understood themselves, to how they navigated through the world, their white skin was generally interpreted as non-raced and as such, granted them access in this respect.

Whiteness studies has gained momentum over the last fifteen years, and my work has benefitted significantly from sociologists, art historians, and historians who engage in such critical inquiry. The growth of whiteness studies reflects a continued need to interrogate the nuances of the multiple elements of race. Frankenberg poignantly illuminates the various dimensions of whiteness, arguing it is a social position that contributes to one's perspective and outlook on oneself and other

³⁶⁷ Terence Mullaly, "Mark Tobey's Art Offers Solace to the Baffled," Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; "Tobey the Mystic," November 15, 1945, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Douglas Davis, "Mark Tobey's Earthy Magic," *Newsweek*, July 29, 1974, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

³⁶⁸ Ruth Frankenberg, *The Social Construction of White Women, Whiteness, Race Matters* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1.

individuals. She argues, “First, whiteness is a location of social advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, ‘whiteness’ refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.”³⁶⁹ This latter dimension applies to the critical reception of Frankenthaler and Tobey, white artists working in a nonfigurative idiom, and whose white skin was omitted from discussion in reviews and scholarship, but it nevertheless affected how critics and scholars approached and interpreted these artists and their output.

Berger explains the challenges and dilemmas directly facing nonwhite Americans because of the cultural construction of whiteness and white privilege. He warns of the tendency to correlate increasing achievement of people of color with decreasing bias,

Americans invested in whiteness today frequently point to the lessening of individual bias, the declining significance attached to physiology, and the waning of legislated discrimination, as well as the rise of nonwhite participation in business, politics, entertainment, and sports and to the entrenchment of affirmative action programs as proof that minorities who fall behind European-Americans are culturally (or even biologically) predisposed to fail.³⁷⁰

In addition, Berger notes that the rising success of people of color does not indicate a negation of bias. On the other hand, he poignantly explains, “Instead, it testifies to the triumph of a racialized system wherein such individual attitudes and successes are merely incidental to advancing the interests of whites.”³⁷¹ Thus, modern and

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 174.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

contemporary theories of race are also integrated into this chapter, to provide context for the changing approach to the artists in the critical realm.

The ‘racial hierarchies’ to which Berger refers took root at the end of the eighteenth century, and remain an integral part of the American social structure to this day.³⁷² The irony of this history, however, is that the pronounced focus on racial categorization emerged just as the United States expressed a commitment to human rights. Philosophy professor Robert Bernasconi explains, “At almost exactly the same time that the concept of race was given precision, the American Declaration of Independence proclaimed human equality.”³⁷³ Bernasconi examines this conflicting juxtaposition, asserting, “Since the Enlightenment one of the great political puzzles has been the combination of cosmopolitan ideals and racist practices. One does not see an initial failure to meet a new higher set of standards, so much as a series of appalling blind spots in the application of the noble and profound statements of human dignity that are the hallmark of the period.”³⁷⁴

Analyzing the history of attitudes on race, sociologist Michael Banton explores the roots of the concept of race. He explains, “In the earliest phase of its career ‘race’ meant descent at a time when people understood little of the biology of descent. In the nineteenth century ‘race’ became identified with a controversial scientific theory that was found to be erroneous and which, had science been a more

³⁷² See Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), for an overview and analysis of this history.

³⁷³ Robert Bernasconi, “The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances,” in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 285.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

logical and less human enterprise, should have been discarded after 1859.”³⁷⁵ Thus during this period, Banton concludes, “the old idea was salvaged and rebuilt on a foundation quite different from that of the pre-Darwinian era, while in the present it is being used for purely political purposes to identify communities without intending to imply that the chief differences between them stem from inheritance.”³⁷⁶ Banton locates and unpacks the implications of the loaded term ‘race’ and provides an overview of its fluid meaning. The changing concepts of race permeated the art world, as art critics integrated the varying ideas about what race is and means into their reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, in overt and subtle ways, depending on the period in which the critic wrote and the general attitude about race at that time. This societal construction of race framed how critics looked at art, the aspects of these nonfigurative paintings on which they focused, and critically, how they interpreted nuances in the paintings.

Although the history of race relations and bias in the United States harkens back to the colonial era, the last one hundred years reflect a complicated account of race relations. Bernasconi argues, “Racism wants to make its targets disappear, but it does not want them to disappear into anonymity. It wants to see them without seeing them. It wants to identify its targets unambiguously without having to face them.”³⁷⁷ Bernasconi explains that integral to the process of seeing “without seeing”³⁷⁸ is the

³⁷⁵ Michael Banton, “The Idiom of Race: A Critique of Presentism,” in *Theories of Race and Racism*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 62.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Bernasconi, “The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances,” 288.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

way racism influences and determines how society-at-large views African Americans. Arguing that this form of control is socially conditioned, therefore altering in time and space, Bernasconi observes the changing social interpretation of race. He reviews this history, noting, “In slavery times, Whites saw Blacks as slaves: freed Blacks had to be able to prove their status. Furthermore, under slavery, Blacks were supposed to appear happy; under segregation, submissive and today the stereotypes are manipulated in the form of images of the welfare queen, the teenage mother, the gang member, and the drug addict.”³⁷⁹ The effect of this categorization is profound, permeating the culture and affecting not only how whites view African Americans, but also how the society-at-large, including African Americans, understands racial categorization and the roles of various members of such groups. Additionally, these ideas impact how members of the art world view, critique, and analyze one another, and art objects.

Bernasconi contends that these racial notions spread effectively, quickly, and broadly throughout society. He notes, “As a result of the construction of these stereotypes that are disseminated through the media and through hearsay, many Whites are threatened simply by the sight of a young Black man. If he is not already known to us, the stereotype intervenes . . . It is a case of seeing without seeing.”³⁸⁰ This construction of race is complicated by the fact that all races are constructed. Thus, whiteness itself is socially produced. Berger asserts as well, “Virtually every study of whiteness opens with the academic commonplace that there are no

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

significant genetic distinctions between the races, and that our system of racial classification is an invention of the West.”³⁸¹ As such, Berger argues, “shifting definitions of whiteness presented opportunities and perils for Native American, African American, and European-American peoples.”³⁸² Throughout the history of race in the United States, whiteness has been constructed in such a way as to allow the white population access, power, and dominance. Additionally, whiteness in America is understood to be representative of the society-at-large, so that white America speaks for all members of the society.

Affected by the changing social constructions of race, the artists examined in this dissertation lived in the United States during a period of significant change in both the policies on race and the country’s understanding of race. The legislative and social movements of the twentieth century reflect some advances in the effort toward racial equality, while other movements reveal resistance and impediments to progress and change. However, both paths affected the lives of these artists and their critics. It is therefore necessary to review several significant shifts with regard to race in twentieth-century United States, in order to situate the critical framework of these critics and scholars. Furthermore, this brief historical examination also provides context for the artistic and personal responses of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, to their reception.

The history of race in the United States is directly connected to the reception of these artists, as it influenced critics’ value systems, thinking, approaches, and

³⁸¹ Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 4.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

responses to art and artists. Berger asserts, “Thus images silently reinforced ideological systems that benefited whites, disadvantaged nonwhites, ensured that certain deviant and marginal European-Americans suffered materially for their outsider status, and prompted those seeking acceptance as white to trade elements of their human nature and ethnic identities for a privileged race.”³⁸³ Berger argues that the dominant value system within the United States, which was developed and based on racial difference and categorization, has systematically permeated the country’s structure and adheres to the interests of whites. He explains, “In the past minorities suffered only to the extent that individuals judged them as other and then imposed discriminatory penalties; now systemic inequities were hardwired into the nation’s core institutions. The racial values of Euro-America, once expressed primarily in the violent acts of individuals and groups, now found outlet in anonymous structures perfectly tailored to meet the imagined needs and desires of whites.”³⁸⁴ Throughout the mid- to late-twentieth century, popular stereotypes circulated throughout an increasingly broad public, perpetuating a system of inequality.

Race-Related Events and the Artists’ Early Lives

The 1890s—the decade of Thomas’s and Tobey’s birth—were marked by significant events relating to race, including the Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld racial segregation as constitutional under the policy of “separate but equal.” This decision meant that separate but equal services and

³⁸³ Ibid., 173.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 174.

facilities for African Americans and whites were constitutional.³⁸⁵ In 1909, the year in which Norman Lewis was born, a group of prominent African Americans and liberal whites formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The first decades of the twentieth century were also marked by the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia, realized into film in 1915, with the release of *Birth of a Nation*, an account of Klansmen as heroes. The Red Summer of 1919 followed, with African American soldiers returning home from World War I.³⁸⁶

The 1920s, the decade of Frankenthaler's birth, marked a period in Harlem when the arts—literary, performing, and visual—flourished. This “New Negro Movement,” later renamed the Harlem Renaissance, celebrated African American achievement and resulted from a great influx of African Americans from the South to New York, a flourishing theater community, an established black middle class, and large black churches. The Harlem Renaissance thus established Harlem as the center of a flurry of activity. The presence of influential figures such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, Duke Ellington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Aaron Douglas, was significant for Norman Lewis, who lived in Harlem during this period.

³⁸⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw underscores the complicated components of domination inherent in this case. She explains, “There were at least two targets for Plessy to challenge: the construction of identity (‘What is a black?’), and the system of subordination based on that identity (‘Can blacks and whites sit together on a train?’). Plessy actually made both arguments, one against the coherence of race as a category, the other against the subordination of those deemed to be black.” Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 376. The multidimensional aspects of this case illuminate the importance of intersectionality.

³⁸⁶ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 359, 384-388, 512-513.

These cultural icons contributed to an artistically rich and intellectual environment focused on promoting African American cultural endeavors.³⁸⁷

Race and the Mid-Century Art World

However, it was not until the 1960s that society laid the groundwork for increased opportunity for marginalized artists. The art world was beginning to recognize identity and difference in the culture. Further, the capital of the American art world had just been temporarily expanded beyond New York, to include Washington, DC. In fact, during the late 1950s and 1960s, Washington, DC, artists Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland took inspiration from Frankenthaler and established the Washington Color School. Art critic Amei Wallach writes of the fateful moment in 1953 when Louis and Noland first viewed Frankenthaler's painting, *Mountains and Sea*. Wallach proclaims, "color field painting was born."³⁸⁸ The critic explains that this style of painting adhered to Greenbergian notions of modern art. She notes that colorfield "concerned itself with nothing but materials—the painting and flat canvas—and with the process of soaking paint into canvas. It was painting about painting, self-referential and hermetically sealed. By the end of the decade, when de Kooning and his followers were being consigned to the temporary scrap heap, color field seemed a viable way for abstract painting to move forward."³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 400-417.

³⁸⁸ Wallach, "Arts and Craftiness," 25.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

The art community-at-large, during the 1960s and early 1970s, underwent major changes. Art historian and critic Barbara Rose explains, “the ranks of painters and art lovers began to swell at an alarming rate. During the sixties, the New York art world expanded to spill over into the universities and the mass media. President Johnson invited artists to the White House.”³⁹⁰ Further, describing the effect of this popularity on art world members, Rose asserts, “Dealers, curators, critics, writers and collectors engaged in a frantic round of activity, while bewildered artists tried to adjust to the new situation in which Americans had at last begun to identify culture with salvation.”³⁹¹ Increasingly dealers, curators, and writers developed educational activities that enhanced public arts awareness and appreciation, creating a general openness towards contemporary art creation.

Many prominent artists pursued starkly different visions and interests from those of the previous decade, namely Abstract Expressionism. This period witnessed the emergence of new art movements such as Pop Art, New Perceptual Realism, Photo-Realism, Op Art, Minimal Art, Process Art, Earth Art, and early Conceptual Art. Of this time, art critic Irving Sandler notes, “young artists embraced artistic attitudes different from those of the preceding Abstract Expressionist avant-garde. Certainly their styles looked radically different. Instead of the hot, dirty, handmade, direct-from-the-self look of fifties art, sixties art looked cool, clean, mechanistic, and distanced-from-the-self. It soon seemed that only work that partook of the changes sensibility commanded attention, and the cooler it looked, the more recognition it

³⁹⁰ Barbara Rose, *Twentieth-Century American Painting* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986), 98.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

received.”³⁹² Sandler’s points are valid and salient, illuminating the significant difference in interests on the part of 1960s’ artists. This revolution in taste became apparent in the growing popularity at the time of the reputation of Ad Reinhardt and “minimal art.”³⁹³ Additionally, Sandler’s comments, in combination with David Brooks’ account of the rise of the bohemian counterculture,³⁹⁴ and Barbara Rose’s explanation about the general public’s increasing arts appreciation, reveal the massive transformations permeating American society.

Commenting on the changing artistic environment, art critic E.C. Goossen writes, “Toward the end of the 1950s, obviously in reaction to the expressionistic excesses of popular ‘action’ painting, many artists turned to more static kinds of composition. Bilateral symmetry, the centered format and other devices for a more orderly approach to composition appeared in the work of artists.”³⁹⁵ Additionally, Goossen notes, “For the next few years such simplified, static compositional orders were to be effectively refined, to become, in effect, ends in themselves, producing a characteristic period art known as ‘minimalism.’”³⁹⁶ Critics and galleries praised the crisp, hard-edged, non-expressionistic works of art that referred not to the artist, but rather to the medium itself and/or the surrounding physical environment.

³⁹² Irving Sandler, *American Art of the 1960's* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 60.

³⁹³ See Rose, *Twentieth-Century American Painting*, 99.

³⁹⁴ David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 10.

³⁹⁵ E.C. Goossen, *Helen Frankenthaler*, exh. cat. (New York: Rapoport Printing Corporation, 1969), 12.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Art historian Max Kozloff expanded on this impression of the environment of the 1960s in an article entitled “Art and the New York Avant-garde,” writing, “Art in the sixties belongs to an American generation still under forty, aware of its origins in Abstract-Expressionism, but committed to a development that has profoundly altered the look of pictorial and three dimensional activity.”³⁹⁷ Kozloff explained further that the heightened interest in form rather than the artist’s personal expression was the basis on which art should be judged. In his own words, “Equivocation of form and content is now the principle of an art which strangely begins to evoke our condition and our times. Even when one is dealing with painting that is decidedly allusive, if not literal in the objects and images it depicts, one cannot respond as one does to representational art.”³⁹⁸ Kozloff declared that the human element of painting became unimportant and undesirable during this period.

However, despite formal artistic concerns, race remained a prominent element in the reception of works of art throughout midcentury. Curator Lowery Stokes Sims argues that race was an integral part of reception throughout the mid-decades of the twentieth century: “In the 1950’s, the critical establishment shunned recognizable form in art. But for African American artists, regardless of their style, meaning or allusion was key to their expression. Whether it was the ‘agreed assumptions’ described by artist Al Loving or the overt social commentary of Robert Colescott,

³⁹⁷ Max Kozloff, “Art and the New York Avant-garde,” *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1964): 539.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

rarely are ‘images . . . assumed to be incidental to the meaning of the work.’³⁹⁹ Thus critics inevitably read race into the art works of African American artists.

Also during this period, in the mid-1960s, writer Amiri Baraka started the Black Art Movement, encouraging and bringing diversity to American literature, which extended into other areas of the arts. The Black Arts Movement gained traction in the early 1970s. It was an outgrowth, and thus, directly related to, the Black Power Movement, which expanded in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, advocating separate institutions for African Americans and whites as a means to promote equality. Black Arts Movement advocate Larry Neal asserted in 1968, that the Black Arts Movement is “opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic . . . sister of the Black Power concept . . . it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America . . . the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique, and iconology.”⁴⁰⁰

Perhaps as a result of their awareness of the concepts, ideas, and observations later presented in the organized form of the Black Arts Movement, and out of a determination to avoid marginalization and have critics read their works through a non-raced lens, Lewis (after the mid-1940s) and Thomas reserved their civil rights advocacy for areas outside of the studio. Working in nonfigurative idioms and

³⁹⁹ Lowery Stokes Sims, “African American Artists and Postmodernism: Reconsidering the Careers of Wilfredo Lam, Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Robert Colescott,” in *African American Visual Aesthetics: A Postmodernist View*, ed. David C. Driskell (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 114.

⁴⁰⁰ Larry Neal, “The Black Arts Movement,” *Drama Review* 12 (Summer 1968): 29.

focusing on palette, shape, and line, these artists did not overtly incorporate images of black life into their mature paintings. Nevertheless, critics and scholars explicitly read race into their nonfigurative paintings, underscoring this aspect of their biography, or assuming that because the artists were African American, their choice of color, shade, and texture must have served as a political statement on race.

Artist Keith Morrison described the period of the 1960s, asserting, “artists learned that they are freed artistically more by political power than by any aesthetic development . . . the white establishment gave black artists more play than ever before, not because the art had suddenly become better, but because they were afraid of black power. In the 1980’s they stopped because they were no longer afraid.”⁴⁰¹ Indeed, between the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, and the Black Arts Movement, the period of the 1960s gave rise to renewed presence and creativity of African Americans, with increased voices expressing challenges and hopes in a variety of media.

Morrison also addressed issues of race in the reception of artists, and particularly, how the social construction of race has affected African American artists. He explains,

Color is becoming a descriptive term: an adjective to describe differences in hue, rather than a noun to describe a race. As color distinctions proliferate, white may become not a race apart, but another color among many. But will this eliminate racism in America? The likely answer is no, since without a massive redistribution of wealth (not to happen soon) people of color will remain the poorest. By virtue of being poor—and disenfranchised—artists of color likely will continue to work outside of the art establishment for the foreseeable future. The driving force, then, of much American art inevitably

⁴⁰¹ Keith Morrison, “The Global Village of African American Art,” in *African American Visual Aesthetics: A Postmodernist View*, ed. David C. Driskell (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 28.

may become a political term rather than a racial one. 'White' should also be a political term since there is no scientific way to establish whiteness by looking at someone.⁴⁰²

Morrison's comments have particular resonance when considering Tobey's reception. As a white man producing nonfigurative art through the middle decades of the twentieth century, critics often described or implied the universal notions manifested in his work. While on the surface this idea may appear to be void of racial meaning, in fact, critics determined that the nonfigurative creations of a white man were worthy and valid enough to represent and speak on a broad level.

Bernasconi discusses the topics of human rights and universality with regard to race, asserting, "Human rights are widely acknowledged as providing a standard that transcends national and cultural boundaries. But does universality offer an adequate defense against racism? Does the appeal to the universal provide a means for overcoming discrimination against groups on the basis of racial differences? Or is racism thereby being addressed by a cosmopolitanism that keeps White privilege intact?"⁴⁰³ Bernasconi's queries pierce through the critical veil employed by many twentieth-century critics, revealing the fact that use of this term often ignores and further marginalizes many subgroups from the dominant cultural ideology by denying them representation (and not allowing them to represent the many) and inclusion in the mainstream notion of the universal. Lewis's reception supports Bernasconi's notions, as his critics avoided use of all-encompassing concepts, such as the universal, instead examining the artist within far more narrow confines.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 38-39.

⁴⁰³ Bernasconi, "The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances," 284.

Race and Norman Lewis

Scholarly engagement with Lewis's paintings has been minimal, with the 1990s serving as the primary period of academic interest in the artist. Consideration that does exist often has racially themed approaches, focusing on the correlation between formal properties in his work and implied racial connotations. And while the artist faced racial discrimination throughout his life, he reserved his mature artistic output for formal explorations and advocated racial equality in other outlets.

Thus, Lewis experienced race differently from his white counterparts. He explained these issues in a 1969 oral history interview with Henri Ghent. He asked Lewis about his first studio. In Lewis's answer, the artist recollected racial issues he battled with regard to renting space. He asserted that his white contemporaries were immune to such matters. For example, Lewis explained that issues of racism affected his apartment rent, noting "despite the fact that there were a bunch of left-wing artists that I was paying twice as much rent as they [sic] . . . these were guys, white artists, who I enjoyed being with and we . . . were fighting for a lot of things that they materially benefitted from but I didn't. We were trying to set up the unions, teaching unions."⁴⁰⁴

When Ghent probed deeper, inquiring about how the group of artists – including Ad Reinhardt, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, and Lee Krasner – encouraged Lewis, the artist explained in more detail the

⁴⁰⁴ Norman Lewis, "Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis," interview by Henri Ghent, July 20, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lewis68.htm>.

levels of discrimination he experienced.⁴⁰⁵ He declared, “I think amongst themselves that as white artists – I make this distinction because there is a difference between being white and black which is quite obvious – their problems and my own never coincided despite the fact that we were fighting for, say, a better world.”⁴⁰⁶ He continued by discussing his investigation by the FBI and harassment by police, which his aforementioned fellow artists did not experience. Lewis also remarked on the problem of living in Harlem and white patronage, stating, “Because slowly I lost contact with people who believed in me and there happened to be whites who were afraid to come to Harlem and it has cost me a lot of money despite that fact that the attraction was the cheap rent in Harlem . . . it was almost a death living there, culturally because there wasn’t the stimulus there to nourish this thing that you believe just talking to people.”⁴⁰⁷

His experiences illuminate the challenges facing African American artists in the United States. These obstacles include access and recognition. Cornel West explains, “To be a black artist in America is to be caught in . . . ‘the modern black diasporan problematic of invisibility and namelessness.’ This problematic requires that black people search for validation and recognition in a culture in which white-supremacist assaults on black intelligence, ability, beauty, and character circumscribe such a search.”⁴⁰⁸ The example of Lewis’s experiences in comparison to his white

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Cornel West, “Horace Pippin’s Challenge to Art Criticism,” in *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*, ed. Kymberly N. Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002), 324.

contemporaries reveals problems he encountered on account of his race that white artists working in similar idioms did not experience. Racial stereotypes thus permeated society throughout Lewis's lifetime, and affected how both the culture-at-large and the art world received him and his colleagues.

Henri Ghent asked Lewis about the need for African American artists to include race-related subjects in their output in order to increase cultural understanding of the social challenges they experienced.⁴⁰⁹ In response, the artist carefully explained the issues that African American artists faced. He adeptly noted, "I think it is a kind of peculiar problem here in the fact that when I started to paint the majority of painters that I knew who painted Negroes were white."⁴¹⁰ However, Lewis continued, "black artists talk about black art. And I don't think that there is any such thing."⁴¹¹ Lewis contended that there was no inherent way for an onlooker to know the race of the artist by looking at his output. He explained, "if you have a classroom and you have a model that is black and maybe there are ten students and they are all white and they paint a black model or draw . . . you can't look at the subject matter just because it is black and say it was done by a black artist . . . in Europe you see paintings in which they might have a black figure. That doesn't say that the artist was black."⁴¹² Lewis incisively cut through the rhetoric, and exposed the underpinnings of art world assumption about race, and by extension, underlying prejudice. The

⁴⁰⁹ Norman Lewis, "Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis."

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

artist alluded here to the fact that critics and onlookers assumed the race of an artist based on the subject matter.

While Lewis's work was subject to this line of criticism, one difference between his output and the work he discussed in the above quote is that Lewis generally painted nonfigurative subject matter. Still, critics and scholars rarely analyzed his form and palette in detail.⁴¹³ Instead, they evaluated his paintings against the backdrop of his race, thereby superimposing aspects of his biography onto his paintings. Some critics attempted to locate Lewis specifically, as an African American working-class male artist. For example, the subtitle of one 1930s article read, "Harlemites Honored at Metropolitan Art Exhibit."⁴¹⁴ Similarly, Starling Shieks titles an early article on Lewis, "Harlem Painter Wins Art Award."⁴¹⁵ Repeating this tendency decades later, Garrett Holg commenced his article on Lewis (and Charles Alston) by indicating, "The deliberate pairing of two Harlem-based artists was apt."⁴¹⁶ These critics thereby underscored not only Lewis's race, but status as a resident of a working-class, black neighborhood in New York. Additionally, in their focus on Lewis as an African American working-class painter, they omitted thorough consideration of the formal qualities of his work in their

⁴¹³ Critic Garrett Holg concluded his 1994 review of Lewis (and Charles Alston) by asserting, "Despite such fine works as these, Alston and particularly Lewis continue to be underappreciated. A more in-depth look at the works of each is definitely in order." Garrett Holg, "Innovators of the African-American Aesthetic, Isobel Neal," *Art News* 93, no. 1 (January 1994): 170.

⁴¹⁴ "Two Artists Given Prizes: Harlemites Honored at Metropolitan Art Exhibit," Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Lewis won this prize in 1934. Although this article is undated, it references this contemporary event, and was thus likely written around this period.

⁴¹⁵ Starling Shieks, "Harlem Painter Wins Art Award," August 4, 1956, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴¹⁶ Holg, "Innovators of the African-American Aesthetic, Isobel Neal," 170.

criticism. These critics highlighted Lewis's race when such information was irrelevant,⁴¹⁷ putting into practice Robert Bernasconi's poignant thesis on race, which asserts, "Those who are most invisible in the public realm, in the sense of being powerless, mute, and deprived of human rights, are often most visible to those who disempower them, silence them, and exploit them."⁴¹⁸

Additionally, critics regarded Lewis as derivative. In particular, they situated him as a copyist of Mark Tobey. Such criticism stripped Lewis of his individuality, dismissed him on account of formal parallels with a colleague and contemporaneous artist, and failed to consider his individual, creative achievements.⁴¹⁹ These critiques reveal the general, historical omission of detailed analysis of Lewis's paintings, in which critics overlooked key formal aspects while relegating him to the margins of mid-century progressive abstract movements. In recent years, contemporary critics have even proposed that Lewis specifically conveyed his interest in issues of race, civil rights, and racial equality, through palette and paint application.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ For example, the following critical reviews referenced Lewis's race. "Two Artists Given Prizes: Harlemites Honored at Metropolitan Art Exhibit"; Shieks, "Harlem Painter Wins Art Award"; Charles Corwin, "Life Magazine's Art Spread and Norman Lewis, Tromka Shows," April 10, 1950, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Holg, "Innovators of the African-American Aesthetic, Isobel Neal," 170; Edward M. Gomez, "A New Look at American Modernism," *Art & Antiques* (February 1996): 41; Peter Plagens, "Norman Lewis, Studio Museum in Harlem," *Artforum International* (Summer 1998): 126; Garrett Holg, "Norman Lewis, G.R. N'Namdi, Chicago," *Art News* 98, no. 7 (Summer 1999): 161; Grady T. Turner, "Norman Lewis at June Kelly, Bill Hodges and the Studio Museum," *Art in America* (January 1999): 105; Mason Klein, "Norman Lewis, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery," *Artforum International* (November 1999): 143.

⁴¹⁸ Bernasconi, "The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances," 287.

⁴¹⁹ For example, the following critical reviews situated Lewis as an imitator and copyist of Mark Tobey. Corwin, "Frasconi-Talented, Socially Conscious Artist"; Henry McBride, "Attractions in the Galleries: Willard Gallery," *New York Sun*, March 4, 1949, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; "Norman Lewis," *Art News* (1954), Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴²⁰ The following critical reviews included reference to Lewis' use of palette as conveying social themes: Plagens, "Norman Lewis, Studio Museum in Harlem," 126; Turner, "Norman Lewis at June

As adduced through review of the criticism, the written critical materials on Lewis tells a story of race-based marginalization in which the social construction of Lewis's skin color led to critics indirectly and overtly connecting his output to his race. They examined his work through this lens, or dismissed his work on this account. Lowery Stokes Sims explains in her article, "A Truly Racial Art," that critics disparaged works by African American artists that did not utilize and reveal African art inspiration. Sims explains that critics "complained that their work was 'imitative and derivative' although 'the fountainhead' of African art was at their disposal."⁴²¹

Lewis, as an African American male artist in the United States, was subject to a racially-based critique wherein the color of his skin and his personal biography were often overtly interspersed with the formal analysis of his paintings. Valerie Mercer, curator of the General Motors Center for African American Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts asserts, "Norman Lewis and other African American abstractionists of his generation experienced racism from the art world because they were not doing what was expected of them as African American artists. They were not depicting the

Kelly, Bill Hodges and the Studio Museum," 105. Mason Klein suggested that Lewis's works were "complexly personal (socially conscious)" and that "it is hard to consider Lewis's achievement as emerging from any sea of universal symbolism." Klein, "Norman Lewis, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery," 143.

⁴²¹ Lowery Stokes Sims, "A Truly Racial Art," *Art News* 102, no. 1 (January 2003): 84. This line of thinking, as Sims asserts, was predicated upon, and thus encouraged by, the 1925 essay by Alain Locke, entitled "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts." In this essay, Locke encouraged African American artists to focus on both the technical aspects of African art as well as the decorative and representative formal components of the works. Sims further argues that Locke viewed modernism as a style of art making in which African American artists could express a connection with Africa by focusing on the abstract forms inherent in much African art: "African art, therefore, would allow African-American artists to entertain the condition of being modern." Ibid.

African American experience through figuration or a representational approach to their work but attempting to develop their individual notions about a distinct formal language that referenced their culture, as well as universal ideas.”⁴²² Yet the implication in the critical reviews is that only white nonfigurative artists could convey any type of universal meaning.⁴²³ Through their paintings, the artists’ audiences were made to dissociate paint color from a specific and literal representation of racial identity.⁴²⁴

Thus, in spite of the abstracted nature of his output, critics have nevertheless routinely offered race-based readings of Lewis’s paintings, arguing the nonfigurative forms and colors must correlate to the challenges a mid-century African American man faced. Art historian Ann Gibson explains, “Some artists, and Pollock was one, incorporated a Jungian idea of the collective unconscious into their painting, aiming to transcend the questions realism inevitably posed of *whose* freedom, *whose* vantage point, allowed this picturing of universality. In pigment stretched taut or flaccidly puddled, viewers saw emotion metaphorized or indexed, not people whose faces might be white or brown.”⁴²⁵ However, many such artists were met with much

⁴²² Valerie Mercer, “A Conversation About Masters and Their Markets with Michael Chisolm, et. al” *The International Review of African American Art* 19, no. 4 (2004): 10.

⁴²³ Ann Eden Gibson, “Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock,” *Artforum* 30, no. 7 (March 1992): 67.

⁴²⁴ Thus if Abstract Expressionism was an art that “expresses its creator,” critics clearly chose which aspects of the maker’s identity to underscore, with artists working, as well, to accommodate critical approval. Criticism of Robert Motherwell exemplifies this point. Christopher Reed explains that in 1948, Greenberg “chastised Robert Motherwell for allowing the magnificence of his ‘turbid and vehemently brushed’ paintings to collapse into ‘an archness like that of the interior decorator.’ Little wonder that Motherwell, his heterosexuality impugned by military authorities . . . and prominent critics, turned his abstractions increasingly toward signifiers of masculinity.” Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

critical support. Lewis, unlike many of his white artistic contemporaries, did not have such sponsorship of influential critics. A poignant query to consider with regard to the critical reception, therefore, is what aspect of the nonfigurative artist's identity was met with critical praise? Gibson acknowledges that Lewis did not receive the same critical support as his white contemporaries, like Jackson Pollock. Clement Greenberg and James Johnson Sweeney praised much of what Pollock produced, which might otherwise have been challenged.⁴²⁶

Thus, beneath the surface of the photograph of the Artists' Sessions at Studio 35 rests a harsh reality. In the image, Lewis is seated amongst famed Abstract Expressionists Robert Motherwell and Willem de Kooning (figure 33).⁴²⁷ While Lewis worked alongside these better-known painters, was represented by similarly famous galleries, and produced expressionist works during the Abstract Expressionist period, the art world nevertheless marginalized his work in print, exhibition opportunities, and the marketplace.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Jorge Daniel Veneciano, "The Quality of Absence in the Black Paintings of Norman Lewis," in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, Ann Eden Gibson, Lowery S. Sims, Jorge D. Veneciano, exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 36.

⁴²⁸ Not only was Lewis entrenched in the art movements of the day, but he was also active in various organizations, including African American arts organizations. He was aware of the critics and their philosophies on art. Gibson provides evidence of this fact, explaining, "In his copy of the 1947-48 issue of the art magazine *Possibilities*, Lewis had circled the following sentence from the statement of editorial intent written by Harold Rosenberg . . . and Robert Motherwell . . . 'Political commitment in our times means logically—no art, no literature. A great many people, however, find it possible to hang around in the space between art and political action.'" Ann Eden Gibson, "Black is a Color: Norman Lewis and Modernism in New York," in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 22.

See chapter eight for a more in-depth discussion of Abstract Expressionism.

Visual evidence of this relegation is in the form of yet another photograph. The famous “Irascible Group of Advanced Artists” from *Life* magazine in 1951 includes the leading artists of the period—Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt (a purported close Lewis friend), Adolph Gottlieb, and Hedda Sterne—but excludes Norman Lewis (figure 34). The photograph represents core figures integral to this progressive group. To be included, one had to be invited by a sitting artist.⁴²⁹ Lewis’s exclusion, therefore, suggests that while he was colleagues and friends with many of the artists in the photograph, and attended group meetings, those artists did not view him as a significant enough figure to be included.

Critical interest in Lewis has increased since the 1970s, yet reviews of his work are nevertheless scant. Additionally, journalist Harry Henderson explains that even though Lewis achieved what Henderson characterized as “high critical praise,”⁴³⁰ he is “one of the most conspicuously neglected artists in America.”⁴³¹ Henderson notes that Lewis’s life “is characterized by a story of intelligence, prolonged study, hard work, loneliness and frustration due to prejudice; all the while he was making a significant contribution to American art.”⁴³²

Art critic Edward M. Gomez explained in a 1996 *Art & Antiques* article entitled, “A New Look at American Modernism” that critics and scholars are

⁴²⁹ Kinshasha Holman Conwill, “Introduction: The Importance of Being Norman,” in *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings 1946-1977*, David Craven, et al., exh. cat. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1998), 10.

⁴³⁰ Harry Henderson, “Norman Lewis: The Making of a Black Abstract Expressionist, His Achievements and His Neglect,” *The International Review of African American Art* 13, no. 3 (1996): 59.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

reconsidering American modernism and creations of the New York School of the 1940s and 1950s, including work by Lewis.⁴³³ Gomez probes the reasons for such a reexamination of the period. He observes that while these artists did not receive deserved recognition during their working careers, “the curators, historians, and art dealers who are now working to deepen our understanding of American modernism emphasize that these artists’ ideas and accomplishments played vital roles in shaping the creative environments that nurtured the styles and reputations of their more celebrated confrères.”⁴³⁴

Recent criticism also reveals that critics have maintained race as a central component in judging Lewis’s nonfigurative art. In his consideration of Lewis’s exhibition “Norman Lewis: Black Paintings, 1946-77,” critic Peter Plagens asserts that after an “obligatory social-realist period leading up to the mid’-40s,”⁴³⁵ Lewis refused to “do ‘black art,’ i.e., paint figurative pictures of noble, struggling African-Americans.”⁴³⁶ Plagens assesses the artist and his output, noting that Lewis was “a pretty good second-tier Abstract Expressionist whose work suffered . . . because he never quite let go of imposing an *a priori* order, a vague premeditated design, on a kind of painting that needs to run the risk of real disorder to hit the heights.”⁴³⁷ The artists to whom Plagens compares Lewis, including Pollock, maintained subject matter in their abstracted works, making this type of criticism superfluous, yet still

⁴³³ Gomez, “A New Look at American Modernism,” 39-40.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁴³⁵ Plagens, “Norman Lewis, Studio Museum in Harlem,” 126.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

impacting and influencing readers and viewers. In fact, Ann Gibson argues in her article “Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock,” that neither Pollock nor Lewis completely eradicated representational forms from their works. Instead, she argues, they created works in which mimetic forms were less overt and more discreet. Gibson writes, “they recast their continuing concerns in less easily detectable form, as suggested in a famous remark attributed to Pollock: ‘I choose to veil the imagery.’” But the switch from realistic to abstract forms that acted out metaphorically what they represented, rather than imitating it mimetically, did enable the successful white artists of the ‘40s and ‘50s to make a new argument for their work: the claim of a generalized humanistic freedom.”⁴³⁸ Plagens’ aforementioned assertion implies that Lewis failed to disavow his cultural specificity. However, it is for the viewer to associate his abstracted form and reduced palette with a particular cultural specificity.⁴³⁹ To be sure, Gibson asserts, “Discussions of Abstract Expressionist subject matter, however, are linked in a crucial but under examined way to another kind of subject: a subject tied to the question of . . . *whose* universalizing, is in effect in this art, a subject instrumental in establishing the different economic and professional levels at which Lewis and Pollock pursued their careers.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Gibson, “Recasting the Canon,” 67. In fact, Pollock expressed a longing to return to figuration, suggesting the confining nature of fame. Christopher Reed proclaims, “Like Tobey, Pollock spoke nostalgically of figuration, claiming, ‘Recognizable images are always there in the end.’ We can only speculate about the directions his art might have taken had he lived longer and felt freer to explore his interests.” Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas*, 155.

⁴³⁹ Various artists compelled the viewer to take interpretive leaps, thereby disclosing as much about the onlooker as the artist. For instance, Reed explains, “Rauschenberg’s *Combines* put the onus of meaning-making on viewers, challenging audiences to name what they see, confident that few dared broach the topic of homosexuality and that those who could explicate the codes would be revealing their own suspicious sensibility.” *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68

Art critic Mason Klein refuses to consider Lewis's work either alongside his contemporaries, or without direct reference to his race. He asserts, "Although his fellow AbExers shared a common interest in Jung, it is hard to consider Lewis's achievement as emerging from any sea of universal symbolism. His subtle suspension of form and content is scarcely the product of intuition alone."⁴⁴¹ Instead, Klein insists that with Lewis, "Unity and division, cohesion and dissipation, all dynamic conditions of color harmony and dissonance and of a static versus vibrant composition—these are the conditions that Lewis employed in his complexly personal (socially conscious) aesthetic purpose."⁴⁴² In fact, Klein asserts that not only did Lewis fail to exclude his social activism from his paintings, but in fact, his nonfigurative works also represent his experiences as an African American man. The critic argues, "Along with addressing the transcendent subject matter of the American Abstract Artists with whom he exhibited, Lewis continued throughout his oeuvre to attenuate his own presence in the world, never forgetting the particulars of the African-American experience—embodied by the narratives of urban families and workers—that governed his earlier realistic style."⁴⁴³ In lieu of a complex formal reading of Lewis's paintings, therefore, Klein thus opts for a primary focus on the artist's "coexistence of representation and abstraction."⁴⁴⁴ This criticism evidences the unwillingness of critics to analyze Lewis's work through a non-raced lens.

⁴⁴¹ Klein, "Norman Lewis, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery," 144.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 143.

Ann Gibson argues that even though Lewis was closely tied to the major proponents of Abstract Expressionism, in both an artistic sense as well as in his everyday life, critics have both infrequently reviewed his works and refrained from aligning him with this avant-garde movement, instead connecting his output with social and cultural concerns. She writes,

He participated in their major forums—appearing at the Club, drinking at the Cedar Bar, showing at one of the important avant-garde galleries of the period (the Marian Willard gallery), and attending the historic artists’ sessions at Studio 35 in 1950. Given Lewis’ age (born in 1909, three years before Pollock), his New York upbringing, his determination to enter the avant-garde, his success in placing himself within it, and the formal and intentional similarities of his work to Abstract Expressionism, his comparative obscurity until recently suggests that the factors that prevented his canonization were strong indeed.⁴⁴⁵

Gibson argues that critics understood Lewis’s inspiration to be influenced by culture rather than nature. As a result, she proposes, they could not attribute to him an intuitive art making process for which they lauded other artists like Jackson Pollock.⁴⁴⁶ Throughout the latter twentieth century, critics continued to incorporate such tendencies into their writings, relegating Lewis to the periphery of the art historical canon, writing about his nonfigurative works with little consideration for formal properties, and instead, fixating on a connection between his forms and palette, and cultural, as well as biographical, concerns.

For example, Garrett Holg’s 1994 *Art News* review considers a Chicago exhibition of Lewis and Charles Alston. Holg writes, “Lewis . . . developed a more

⁴⁴⁵ Gibson, “Recasting the Canon,” 68-69. These venues, including the Club, Cedar Bar, and the Eighth Street Club, served artists and critics of the New York School as gathering places for art discussions. Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1990), 325.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

linear style. A jazzlike improvisational line energizes early figurative works . . . Frequently cartoonlike, his style took on an elegance and sensuousness in later works.”⁴⁴⁷ Holg also reviewed Lewis’s exhibition at G.R. N’Namdi gallery in Chicago, asserting “Much has been made of Lewis’s use of African motifs, but an Asian influence also seemed to pervade many of the works here.”⁴⁴⁸ Thus, whether it is the pairing of Lewis with another African American artist, or the overt associations made between his work and African stylistic concepts, this critic and others explicitly referenced the artist’s race in various reviews, thereby forming the particular racial lens through which readers and onlookers examined Lewis’s work. Art critic Grady Turner follows a similar path in his 1999 review of Lewis’s show at June Kelly Gallery, reading Lewis’s paint color as married to his race. Turner asserts, “For an artist concerned with race relations, black is too significant a color to be used merely for formal juxtapositions. Lewis’s black paintings often refer to the civil-rights struggle so directly as to belie any claims to pure abstraction.”⁴⁴⁹

While Turner also recognizes in this article that many artists worked with primarily black paint during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, such as Joan Mitchell, Franz Kline, Ad Reinhardt, and Robert Motherwell, nevertheless, he rejects this contextualization for understanding Lewis and his painting. The critic writes of his work in a Studio Museum exhibition,

Here Lewis was compared with other abstractionists who worked with black, yet of these, only Reinhardt and Kline were as intent in its pursuit.

⁴⁴⁷ Holg, “Innovators of the African-American Aesthetic, Isobel Neal,” 170.

⁴⁴⁸ Holg, “Norman Lewis, G.R. N’Namdi, Chicago,” 161.

⁴⁴⁹ Turner, “Norman Lewis at June Kelly, Bill Hodges and the Studio Museum,” 105.

The others—de Kooning, Pollock, Motherwell, Rauschenberg—seem to have been added to imply that Lewis belongs among such august company. Lewis doesn't need the help, although Greenbergian pursuits would find fault with his elegance and pictorial depth, as well as his effort to balance abstraction and social issues. The comparisons weren't suitable.⁴⁵⁰

Thus, with an African American artist, works with similar formal considerations to mid-century white artists continue to be critically, overtly, and often disparagingly connected to biography, race, or social activism. The critic nevertheless concludes, “The time is right for a reevaluation of abstract painter Norman Lewis.”⁴⁵¹ However, the regular, blatant underscoring of the artist's race creates consistent interaction with the works through a racial lens, thereby affecting the reader's and onlooker's interpretation.

Gibson also addresses Lewis's decision to incorporate black as a dominant color in many of his paintings throughout his career, like other artists of his generation.⁴⁵² In fact, she explains, “While painting in black was comparatively unusual in the mid-1940s when Lewis began, colleagues from Lewis's own generation of the New York school – Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko among them – used black as a dominant element, often in binary interplay with lighter neutrals or white.”⁴⁵³ Even younger artists who were contemporaries of Lewis gave primacy to the color black,

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Furthermore, Barbara Rose also explains that throughout the early 1950s, “many of the best painters were painting in black and white.” Barbara Rose, “Paintings within the Tradition: The Career of Helen Frankenthaler,” *Artforum* 7, no. 8 (April 1969): 29.

⁴⁵³ Gibson, “Black is a Color,” 11.

evident, for example, in the work of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Frank Stella.⁴⁵⁴

And yet Gibson suggests that Lewis's usage of the color black was different from other artists. She argues in her essay, "Black is a Color: Norman Lewis and Modernism in New York," that the color allowed Lewis to blend his race with his interest in modernism, suggesting that his reasons for utilizing this particular color in his paintings exceeded the formal.⁴⁵⁵ Gibson is an especially important art historian to discuss here because she is the leading scholar of Lewis, and yet her formal reading of his paintings is problematic. She integrates his race and biography into her own interpretation of his nonfigurative works, and suggests that his similar use of paint was distinct on account of his race. Therefore, she transforms line, color, and form from formal properties of painting to biographical symbols. Because of her stature as an influential art historian, Gibson's assertion of a race-based analysis of Lewis's palette, therefore, has exceptionally significant ramifications in the art world.

In particular, Gibson proposes, "For Lewis, black painting provided an entry to a cosmos . . . in which modernism and African-American identity can coexist . . . he wanted to place the art of African Americans in what we would now call its intercultural visual milieu."⁴⁵⁶ In spite of the fact that Lewis discussed his use of the color black in his paintings, and explained that only its formal properties interested

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

him, Gibson nevertheless argues for a raced reading of the color.⁴⁵⁷ Acknowledging his claims, she still contends that for Lewis, the color black provided the opportunity to reference social themes.⁴⁵⁸ Gibson thus dismisses Lewis's understanding of his own work, stripping him of agency and insight.

Gibson's insistence that this artist's use of a color had to incorporate his socially constructed racial identity is similar to the rhetoric surrounding Frankenthaler's works, where critics maintained that her palette of pastels employed throughout the 1950s revealed her 'femininity.' Even though Frankenthaler insisted that her focus was not on her sex, her critics nevertheless incorporated this aspect of her identity into their analyses. To explain away this tendency with regard to Lewis and race, Gibson asserts that Lewis's very denial of the social meaning of the color black indicated "a conscious repression."⁴⁵⁹ In an effort to contextualize his disavowal, Gibson argues, "Lewis's conviction that painting politically and painting well were divergent pursuits is not unfamiliar in twentieth-century art, especially after

⁴⁵⁷ Fellow painter and friend, Benny Andrews, explains of Lewis, "What I remember most about him is that he was really a purist about art and sincerely felt deep in his heart that race and art had nothing to do with each other." Owen McNally, "A Life Consumed by Art, Activism, and Anger," *Hartford Courant*, March 28, 1999, accessed October 17, 2012, http://articles.courant.com/1999-03-28/entertainment/9903280454_1_american-art-lewis-friend-benny-andrews.

⁴⁵⁸ Gibson, "Black is a Color," 11. Gibson insists that Lewis must have intended social meaning in his use of the color black. She writes, "These contradictions [with the color black itself] are provocatively parallel to the social position of people of African descent in colonial situations. They therefore led thinkers like Norman Lewis – despite his frequent disavowals . . . to understand blackness as a figure for the coexistence of apparently contradictory qualities and concepts. Ibid., 12.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 13. In fact, recognizing the artist's rejection of a social meaning of his chosen palette, Gibson acknowledges Lewis's explanation, noting, "According to Lewis, his conscious interest in the color black 'started with some rhododendrons . . . which I painted. I used just black—to convey the form—and I like that and I went on to try to do other things. Just manipulating the paint was exciting to me.' Lewis's use of black as a form itself occurred at least as early as that of Robert Motherwell, who believed his *Elegy* series 'was the first time somebody in this country used black massively as a color form rather than as absence of color.'" Ibid., 12.

mid-century, when as a principle this idea became enshrined in criticism, catalogues, and textbooks.”⁴⁶⁰

Significantly, and providing explanation for the mood and palette of his paintings, Lewis would frequently paint in the evening in his studio while looking out of the window. He also walked through Harlem at night, later painting scenes of these nocturnal wanderings. His heavy incorporation of the paint color black could also be attributed to his observations of his literal physical surroundings, a fact that Gibson recognizes. She continues in her explanation of Lewis metropolitan paintings, “The fact that these records seem to be caught as strands or trails of light at night attests not only to Lewis’s awareness of the work of the artist Mark Tobey—also represented by [Marian] Willard, and whose paintings of the lights of Broadway were critically acclaimed in those years—but also Lewis’s own notoriously nocturnal habits. Lewis was often up late. Letters to friends dated with the time and day were not infrequently penned or typed at two or three o’clock in the morning.”⁴⁶¹ Thus the source of Lewis’s focus on the color black in his paintings could have been his nighttime walks, in addition to his interest, like his contemporaries, in employing the abstracted stark contrast of black and white paint. Gibson even admits, “Lewis had known for years that the reputations of his most eminent Abstract Expressionist colleagues had been built on abstractions whose formal preoccupations had come to be seen as proof, or as the condition, of their universality, which was understood to exclude social comment. And Lewis was, himself, genuinely fascinated by formal

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 18.

issues: the ‘funny things that happen when you paint,’ as he put it.”⁴⁶² Regardless of both his intent and how his artistic ideology compares to contemporaneous artists working in a similar idiom, therefore, race is central to Gibson’s reading of Lewis’s paintings. The perpetuation of an explicitly race-based reading by this prominent scholar, in spite of the recognition of distinct alternatives to such focus, has significant consequences for the construction of future art world reception of Lewis, as demonstrated herein.

Race, Norman Lewis, and Gallery Representation

Beginning in 1955, The Willard Gallery on 72nd Street and Madison Avenue, represented Norman Lewis for eighteen years. This relationship commenced upon his receipt of the Carnegie Prize.⁴⁶³ Lewis was one of few African American artists showing at New York galleries, and he appreciated the opportunity. However, this affiliation did little to promote the sale of his paintings. Henderson notes, “Years went by . . . there were few buyers, no snowballing of interest, no feature articles in the press, no big opening parties. Other Willard artists recognized what was happening. Feininger went out of his way to tell Lewis not to be discouraged. David Smith and Ad Reinhardt suggested that he get another gallery.”⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶³ The Carnegie International Exhibition annually reviewed contemporary painting. In 1955, Lewis received its Popularity Prize for his painting *Migrating Birds* (1953), determined through visitor voting. “Norman Lewis Chronology,” in *Norman Lewis: From the Harlem Renaissance to Abstraction*, exh. cat. (New York: Kenkeleba House, Inc., 1989), 61. Noting this achievement in the press, however, critics still underscored his race, and class. For example, Starling Shieks wrote about this accolade, titling his article, “Harlem Painter Wins Art Award.” The critic located Lewis as a man from Harlem, which indicated during this period his status as an African American middle class man. Shieks, “Harlem Painter Wins Art Award.”

⁴⁶⁴ Henderson, “Norman Lewis: The Making of a Black Abstract Expressionist, His Achievements and His Neglect,” 63.

In an interview, Lewis expressed his perspective on his limited market success with Willard. The artist understood issues of race to be central to his reception, manifesting in a variety of ways throughout his career. He noted “that was a beautiful experience meeting someone like Marion Willard because she very innocently, I think, thought like I did [sic]. Art is devoid of prejudice and then some fifteen years later she says to me, ‘I know I have failed you.’ What that implied was it was something lacking in promotion or my physical presence to certain environments, you know, rather than being an artist, I am an oddity.”⁴⁶⁵ In this interview, Ghent replied, “All of your reviews would indicate that . . . your shows at the Willard Gallery have been successful, critical successes. Now, tell me did your paintings sell?”⁴⁶⁶ Lewis asserted, “Yes, they sold, but I think I was under certain illusions about – like I felt that one didn’t have to see the artist.”⁴⁶⁷ Ghent interjected, “To appreciate his work?”⁴⁶⁸ And Lewis explained, “Yes. I felt that was just sufficient to see what he is doing. But I find that there is a tremendous amount of social intercourse here which doesn’t exist with Negro painters.”⁴⁶⁹ Ghent again exclaimed, “By that you mean that the collectors want to be able to socialize with the artist and if they happen to like his work and he turns out to be a Negro it sort of stops there, right?”⁴⁷⁰ And Lewis affirmed Ghent’s interpretation, “Yes, and I think there is a tremendous political thing

⁴⁶⁵ Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis.”

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

here. I found that certain white artists made it politically, yet art has nothing to do with politics so that you found you weren't encouraged by the left-wing."⁴⁷¹

Henderson suggests that Lewis's personal connection with Willard obscured his business decisions.⁴⁷² He argues that Marian Willard did not adequately promote Lewis's paintings or introduce him to influential collectors. In fact, Henderson asserts this experience was such an extraordinary personal and professional disappointment that it affected Lewis's entire outlook on the gallery world. Evidence of this effect is in the fact that after his association with Willard ended, Lewis never affiliated with another gallery.⁴⁷³

Dorothy Dehner, an artist whom Willard also represented, provides mid-century cultural context in her explanation of how onlookers interpreted paintings by African American artists. She noted, "'They'd say, 'A Negro painted that.' The implication was that it was somehow unworthy.'"⁴⁷⁴ And the ramifications of these early constructions continue to permeate the various facets of Lewis's reception. Fifty years later, critics are influenced by the notion of universal appeal as expressed by white, nonfigurative artists' paintings, maintaining that Lewis, as an African American man, could not abandon his own political activism in his art. Critics still refuse to consider the formal contributions Lewis made to nonfigurative painting, placing more weight on a race-based interpretation of his palette and the evocative

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Henderson, "Norman Lewis: The Making of a Black Abstract Expressionist, His Achievements and His Neglect," 63.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁷⁴ Quoted in Gibson, "Recasting the Canon," 72.

titles of his painting, rather than thoroughly examining the formal properties within the works.

Race and Alma Thomas

Alma Thomas's experiences within the mid-century art world overlapped and paralleled Norman Lewis's, as both were African American artists working in the competitive field of nonfigurative art creation. And yet, as an African American female artist who started her professional art making career at a mature age, Thomas's involvement with mid-century art critics and artists was highly individual and unlike Lewis's. She therefore possessed several components that intersected to create her distinctive place within the art world. Of such a situational position, Kimberlé Crenshaw asserts in her article on intersectionality, "The concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas . . . Because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of white women, antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms."⁴⁷⁵ Thus Alma Thomas's experiences of race in the art world were similar to Lewis's in that this aspect of her identity was a factor critics employed to marginalize her from the center of artistic creation; they were distinct from Lewis's, however, insofar as critics and onlookers often overtly underscored a variety of multiple but different relegating factors simultaneously, thereby locating, ranking, and emphasizing her

⁴⁷⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," 360.

identity and social standing in discussions of her nonfigurative works of art.⁴⁷⁶

Audiences revealed the importance of social and cultural influences on the construction of their opinions and viewpoints.

During the 1920s, philosopher and influential thinker, Alain Locke, represented one such particularly important social influence, suggesting that African Americans create independent art that underscored their distinctive relationship with Africa.⁴⁷⁷ Locke defined this independence, or self-reliance, as a seeming rejection of “American” culture, thereby forcing the artist to search for a cultural root that may not clearly exist.⁴⁷⁸ Critics and historians continue to maintain Locke’s proposal. For example, art historians Andrea Barnwell and Kirsten Buick explain, “In his seminal 1925 essay ‘Enter the New Negro,’ Alain Locke asserted that the mythic Old Negroes – aunties, uncles, sambos, mammies, and the like – were being replaced by a new generation of proud, emancipated, and thoroughly modern blacks.”⁴⁷⁹ While Locke was referencing a major shift from rural to urban, which he read as modern, the problem with this statement is that it did not fully materialize on a widespread level. In popular culture, the society-at-large reflected older stereotypes of African

⁴⁷⁶ Crenshaw asserts, “With particular regard to problems confronting women of color, when identity politics fail us, as they frequently do, it is not primarily because those politics take as natural certain categories that are socially constructed—instead, it is because the descriptive content of those categories and the narratives on which they are based have privileged some experiences and excluded others.” *Ibid.*, 376.

⁴⁷⁷ Andrea Barnwell, et al., “A Portfolio of Works by African American Artists Continuing the Dialogue: A Work in Progress,” *Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 24, no. 2 (1999): 183.

See Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Touchstone, 1999).

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

Americans, exemplified by actress Hattie McDaniel. While she became the first African American to win an Oscar, in 1939, the accolade celebrated her portrayal of “Mammy,” a domestic servant, in *Gone With The Wind*. Providing further evidence to the stereotypical acting roles reserved for African Americans, the next African American to win an Oscar was Sidney Poitier some 24 years later, in 1963, for playing “Homer Smith” in *Lilies of the Field*. He portrayed a handyman who helped German nuns in the Arizona desert. These roles reveal scarce opportunity throughout the mid-decades of the twentieth century for African Americans in film to represent a range of characters. On the contrary, the roles reserved for African American actors were those that illuminated stereotypical representations, and stand in contrast to Locke’s hope for transformations in how American society views African Americans. Additionally, these roles indicate mid-century social views of African Americans.

Locke’s proclamations have also influenced artists. Some, such as artist Keith Morrison, read race and African connectedness into nonfigurative painting by African American artists, in spite of an artist’s insistence that no such connection exists. Thus, extending Locke’s assertions, Morrison has proclaimed, “African American artists created their own formalism based on African culture.”⁴⁸⁰ Morrison further explains that Locke’s 1925 essay, “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” influenced many African American artists in its underscoring of the importance of African art.⁴⁸¹ As a result, Morrison reads race as intimately and necessarily linked to nonfigurative artistic creations. In fact, he has overtly connected Alma Thomas with African

⁴⁸⁰ Morrison, “The Global Village of African American Art,” 21.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

influences, underscoring a racial connection between Thomas and her nonfigurative art, regardless of statements by Thomas explaining the origins of her inspiration were in nature and natural forms. For example, Morrison asserted, “Like the color school artists, Thomas made stained paintings. Like them she relied on flat shapes of contrasting colors, arranged in bands. Yet her abstractions recall the designs of African American quilts and African fabric.”⁴⁸² Thus in spite of Thomas explicitly stating that she was interested in replicating and abstracting the natural world visible outside of her home, Morrison nevertheless insisted that her art evokes African fabric. Morrison’s 1995 comments reflect Lowery Stokes Sim’s assertion that this mid-century focus on reading race into the output of African American artists formed the foundation of criticism of their artworks, and continued to influence viewers and critics decades later.⁴⁸³

Providing context to his interpretation of Thomas’s paintings, Morrison claimed, “Formalism has been the driving force in the evolution of modern art, but it has been far less of a preoccupation among African Americans than among whites. Perhaps this is because African Americans, having been kept outside the mainstream, searched for other ways to express themselves, and many of them dissolved the boundary between formal and folk art.”⁴⁸⁴ Thomas was a proven exception to this ‘rule,’ placing the formal properties of painting in a primary position. Yet Thomas was less open about her experiences with race and discrimination than Lewis. In

⁴⁸² Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸³ Sims, “African American Artists and Postmodernism,” 114.

⁴⁸⁴ Morrison, “The Global Village of African American Art,” 30.

response to art critic Eleanor Munro's question about whether Alma Thomas thought of herself as a "Black artist," Thomas responded in late 1977, two months before she died, "No, I do not. I am a painter. I am an American."⁴⁸⁵ Continuing with her reply, Thomas discussed segregation, but evaded detailed discussion about how it affected her. She proclaimed, "When I was in the South, that was segregated. When I came to Washington, that was segregated. And New York- that was segregated. But I always thought the reason was ignorance. I thought myself superior and kept on going."⁴⁸⁶ However, in a 1970 interview with Andrea Cohen of the *D.C. Gazette*, Thomas revealed some of the frustrations she felt, and rarely shared with the public. She reflected that in the South, "it was the hardest thing to find a white person who'd want to 'Miss' you. You were a girl as long as you were young, and you were 'Auntie' when you got old. And my mother said 'that would never happen to you all.'"⁴⁸⁷

An examination of the critical reviews shows that critics undermined

Thomas's efforts to dissociate her biography from her painting. They regularly and

⁴⁸⁵ Eleanor Munro, "The Late Springtime of Alma Thomas," *Washington Post Magazine*, April 15, 1979, 24.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. Thomas, however, in a similar manner to other marginalized artists, including Frankenthaler, did not acknowledge that discrimination had affected her life. As previously mentioned, when asked if she had experienced discrimination, the artist responded in the negative, "I don't understand what all this business is about. I heard on television the other day a group of women complaining that banks won't lend women money. I've never had any trouble with banks. If you have a good credit rating and are reputable, banks are delighted to have you as a customer, to borrow money or anything else." Mary Margret Byrne, "She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life," *The Columbus Enquirer*, March 15, 1973, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

When asked specifically about discrimination on account of her race, Thomas answered carefully and evaded recognition of its existence in her life. For instance, she noted, "Of course when I was a child in Columbus there were places we couldn't eat. And there were places not open to us when we moved to Washington. But my family believed in working hard and making the most of the opportunities you had, and that's what I did. You have to be prepared to meet the future. There's no telling what's there for you if you're prepared for it." Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Andrea O. Cohen, "Alma Thomas," *D.C. Gazette*, October 26, 1970.

explicitly evoked race, gender, and age in reading of her nonfigurative paintings, explored fully in the following pages.⁴⁸⁸

Thomas's criticism is marked by praise throughout her career, yet the critical accolades were imbued with negative or stereotypical interpretations, implications, and constructions of her biography, and therefore came in an insincere form. For example, *The Herald Tribune* notes that Thomas is a "notable" artist in a group show of Washington Color Painters, but then describes her as "a Negro woman of advanced years."⁴⁸⁹ If the critic meant to familiarize the reader with Thomas as a person, why not describe her as a Washingtonian who retired from a career as an art schoolteacher to devote her life to painting? The latter provides a life overview void of political underpinnings. Throughout Thomas's career and beyond, critics incorporated pejorative connotations into their praise of Thomas, repeatedly employed with

⁴⁸⁸ For example, the following critical reviews underscored Thomas's gender through its often-unnecessary reference. "Museum Members Gather Tonight for Preview," *The Herald Tribune*, November 30, 1969, 10-C; Paul Richard, "First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist," *Washington Post*, April 28, 1972, B1; Clarissa K. Wittenberg, "Alma Thomas: Paintings at Franz Bader Gallery," *Washington Review* (December 1974), Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Mary Ann Marger, "Teacher as Artist," *St. Petersburg Times*, February 5, 1999, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The following critical reviews referenced Thomas's race. "Museum Members Gather Tonight for Preview," 10-C; Byrne, "She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life"; Paul Richard, "First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist," B1; James R. Mellow, "Expert Abstractions by Alma Thomas," *New York Times*, April 29, 1972, 27; David L. Shirey, "At 77, She's Made It to the Whitney," *New York Times*, May 4, 1972, C-52; Marion Clark, "From the Kitchen to the Corcoran," *Washington Post/Potomac*, September 3, 1972; Mary Margret Byrne, "Museum Has New Show," *The Sunday Ledger-Enquirer*, March 11, 1973, D-7, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Paul Richard, "Art in Black and White," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1974, B2; Charlotte Moser, "Alma Thomas," *Art News* 81, no. 5 (May 1982): 142; Grace Glueck, "Art: Studio Museum Exhibits Alma Thomas," *New York Times*, April 29, 1983, C-22; "Alma W. Thomas," *Art in America* (1998): 22, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; William Carlton, "Black Artist's Vibrant Work to be Shown at Museum," *News Sentinel*, September 3, 1998, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Marger, "Teacher as Artist"; Richard Hyatt, "The Alma Thomas Exhibit: Museum Brings Native's Work Back to Columbus," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, October 17, 1999, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴⁸⁹ "Museum Members Gather Tonight for Preview."

updated terminology. Furthermore, critics routinely underscored her age, similarly to the aforementioned example, and dismissed Thomas as a serious artist because of this factor, exemplifying the ageism embedded in the way that critics interpreted her work.

Critics have also both overtly and through the use of veiled language associated Thomas's working method with the domestic sphere, either overtly incorporating the fact that Thomas painted in her kitchen, or implying this association.⁴⁹⁰ The correlation between this biographical information and the development of an appreciation for her works is unclear, and does little to assist the reader in forming a visual image or understanding of the painting. In fact, it is a description that leaves the details about her work to the imagination, rather than providing proficient description or analysis of her paintings. Instead, it presents a constructed, stereotypical depiction of Thomas herself.

Thus critics often used language which dissociated Thomas from major painters of the mid-twentieth century. By emphasizing her race, gender, disposition, and age, with reference to her kitchen studio, critics regularly highlighted her biography rather than the technical and formal details of her paintings. Their comments relegated Thomas to a category of artists who achieved success relative to

⁴⁹⁰ For example, the following additional critical reviews include specific reference to Thomas painting in her kitchen. Byrne, "She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life"; Ida Jervis, "Magic Windows of Alma Thomas," *The Art Scene* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 14; Andrea Cohen, "It Keeps Me Alive," *The Washingtonian* (August 1972), Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Richard, "First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist," B-1; Angela Terrell, "That's Alma Thomas; Alma Thomas: Cheery Artist," *Washington Post*, September 9, 1972, C1; Shirey, "At 77, She's Made It to the Whitney"; Clark, "From the Kitchen to the Corcoran"; Charles F. Hall, "A Life of Art: Alma Thomas," *The Washington Northstar*, February 12, 1982, 29; "Older Artists: Their Genius Still Showing," *AARP news bulletin*, September 1982, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

other mid-century African American women artists, but were not to be aligned with avant-garde artists like Pollock. Their implication was that Thomas was not worthy of mainstream critique.

Although Thomas has been called a “genius,”⁴⁹¹ a term critics typically reserved for white men, three main strains of criticism are regularly manifested throughout the 1970s, which is the period in which she created her most artistically mature work. First, critics made regular allusion to Thomas’s race, age, gender, and personal circumstances. Next, critics commented upon Thomas as a happy, joyful person, and often used such terminology to describe her canvases.⁴⁹² And finally, critics categorized Thomas and her paintings as “naïve” and “primitive.”⁴⁹³ These components of her reception are discussed in detail below. Organizing her critical reception into these broader categories reveals trends within the criticism, the influences critics have on one another, and critics’ recycling of terminology and ideals.

⁴⁹¹ Lou LuTour, “Global Portraits,” *St. Louis Argus*, March 5, 1973, 12-B.

⁴⁹² Byrne, “Museum Has New Show,” D-7; Jacqueline Trescott, “The Seasons, The Flowers, The Sea . . . All a Part of Her Paintings,” *The Sunday Star*, August 29, 1971, F-3, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Glueck, “Art: Studio Museum Exhibits Alma Thomas,” C-22; Moser, “Alma Thomas,” 142.

⁴⁹³ Phyllis Derfner called her works “vibrant primitivist abstractions.” P[hyllis] D[erfner], “Alma W. Thomas,” *Art News* 71, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 59; Paul Richard predicts that art historians will interpret her work as naïve.” Richard, “First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist,” B-1; David Bourdon implied her naïveté as he expressed with surprise, “At the moment the most celebrated painter in Washington is a retired schoolteacher, Alma W. Thomas.” David Bourdon, “Washington Letter,” *Art International* 16, no. 10 (December 1972): 36. In a similar fashion to Bourdon, a writer for the *Washington Post* underscored her inexperience in the professional art world, and started an article on Thomas with the following assertion: “After 35 years of disciplining unruly children, finger-shaking tends to become second nature. Thus it was not unusual to find a tiny 77-year-old former school-marm shaking her finger at two full-grown, full-bearded men still young enough to have once been her pupils.” “Friendly Gestures at an Opening,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 1972, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Additionally, Charlotte Moser referenced “naïve art” when discussing Thomas’s paintings. Moser, “Alma Thomas,” 142.

Critics routinely evoked Thomas's race and gender, as well as age and class, in their critical writings on her art. Paul Richard explained in the *Washington Post* in 1972, "Miss Thomas is 77 and she's black and she's a woman. Though the museums of New York have been picketed enough to recognize such art-political credentials, she has been honored with this show because her gaily colored pictures, though distinctly Washingtonian, are peculiarly her own."⁴⁹⁴ Andrea Cohen, too, similarly comments on Thomas's biography, asserting, "Alma Thomas is being given a solo show at the Corcoran in September, not because she belongs to so many minority groups, being black, female, and elderly, but because she is one of Washington's finest painters."⁴⁹⁵ The repeating of the irrelevance of Thomas fitting into so many minority categories serves the same purpose as stating her minority status; it is asserted time and again so that when the reader considers the artist, these elements are among the initial impressions manifested. Cohen's title, too, is problematic: "'It Keeps Me Alive' from the Kitchen to the Corcoran."⁴⁹⁶ Although Thomas often painted in her kitchen because it was the location of her favorite view—a crepe myrtle tree outside her kitchen window—most readers would not be familiar with that fact. The title, therefore, further denotes stereotypical associations of Thomas working in the kitchen. Additionally, the precise wording employed varied from critic to critic, and intentionally or not, they used such terminology as an exclusionary weapon.

⁴⁹⁴ Richard, "First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist," B1.

⁴⁹⁵ Cohen, "'It Keeps Me Alive.'"

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

Without critics' construction of Thomas's biography, her race, gender, and age are imperceptible in her works. In 1974, Paul Richard reviewed a group show at the Barnett-Aden Collection in which Thomas was included. Interestingly, Richard noted that the race of the artist is not evident when viewing the paintings, and the show thus "documents powerfully and precisely a variety of esthetic attitudes shared by black and white artists."⁴⁹⁷ This observation is especially salient because it demonstrates the will of critics to construct their critical reviews to reflect not only the formal properties of a work of art, but also the personal biography of the artist.

Critics also utilized the stereotypical categorization of a 'joyful' and 'happy' African American artist in their descriptions of Thomas's output. Andrea Cohen writes of Thomas again, this time in the *D.C. Gazette*, noting that she is a "78-year old painter . . . Yet Ms. Thomas too is unorthodox. While accepting the principles of abstract painting, she has always used them to express the joy she derives from nature . . . soft-edged, bright color."⁴⁹⁸ Paul Richard comments on Thomas's likability: "she smiles at everyone . . . she is not a major master, and there are those who feel she has been overpraised, but her integrity is great, her enthusiasm undeniable, and her brightly colored paintings are impossible to dislike."⁴⁹⁹ Angela Terrell, too, comments on Thomas with regard to her disposition in her *Washington Post* article entitled "That's Alma Thomas; Alma Thomas: Cheery Artist." Terrell describes Thomas's paintings as, "the cheeriest paintings ever seen. They are turned out from

⁴⁹⁷ Richard, "Art in Black and White," B-2.

⁴⁹⁸ Andrea Cohen, "ART Equity Show," *D.C. Gazette* IV, no. 3, November 8, 1972.

⁴⁹⁹ Paul Richard, "A Little Art for Everyone at the Corcoran," *Washington Post*, September 9, 1972, C-1.

her kitchen table like gourmet dishes. She didn't really want a party for fear of spilling something on her special long silk dress."⁵⁰⁰ The tone of this piece is condescending and degrading, equating Thomas to a little girl, proud of her new dress, and worried about damaging such a prized possession. Terrell goes on to note, "Her use of colors, her acute awareness of nature, and her bubbly perspective of life keeps art critics chirping 'happy' and 'zestful' and 'carefree'... Perhaps her young and happy view has been preserved by the children she taught for so long in school and in her neighborhood."⁵⁰¹ Comments such as these conjure up hackneyed associations between African Americans and an outdated American public ethic of a 'happy' and 'smiling' African American individual.

Another outdated stereotype that manifests in much of Thomas's criticism is that of a 'naïve' African American woman. Critics read her nonfigurative paintings through such a lens, superimposing historically prejudicial typecasts on her work. Richard explains this potential pitfall in his 1972 *Washington Post* article, noting "a new sort of painting was in the air of Washington in those days and Alma Thomas absorbed it. Her work had an open, happy confidence about it. It is the sort of Color Painting that art historians may someday categorize as naïve."⁵⁰² Further, Phyllis D[erfner] notes in an *Art News* article that Thomas, in her 1972 Whitney exhibition, "presents a series of vibrant primitivist abstractions."⁵⁰³ Benjamin Forgey writes

⁵⁰⁰ Terrell, "That's Alma Thomas; Alma Thomas: Cheery Artist," C1.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid. C2.

⁵⁰² Richard, "First Solo Show at 77," B5.

⁵⁰³ D[erfner], "Alma W. Thomas," 59.

“Alma Thomas is the naïve of Washington color painters,”⁵⁰⁴ and yet concludes that there is “no mistaking Alma Thomas as a remarkable woman and remarkable artist.”⁵⁰⁵ The use of this particular terminology—‘naïve’—conjures up stereotypical language pejoratively employed throughout American history to remove agency and worth from African Americans in the eyes of the dominant white culture. Thus, to utilize such a term in art criticism inherently associates these specific works of art, and by extension, their maker, with this disturbing use of negative terminology and concepts. Further, the fact that critics fail to clarify the term’s use exaggerates the destructive and complicated nature of the critique, as the reader can only assume a narrow and prejudicial reading of her work.

Critics thus seldom considered Thomas’s paintings in a thorough, serious manner, instead focusing on her biography.⁵⁰⁶ The criticism, whether positive or negative, repeatedly commenced with a disclaimer about her age, gender, physical state, and often her southern roots and class.⁵⁰⁷ In fact, critics rarely positioned

⁵⁰⁴ Benjamin Forgey, “Pretty Good Little Shows Without a Guide,” *The Sunday Star and Daily News*, September 10, 1972.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Instead, they often described both Thomas and her paintings as joyful. For example, the following reviews consider her paintings in this regard. Jervis, “Magic Windows of Alma Thomas,” 15; Richard, “First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist,” B-1; Richard, “A Little Art for Everyone at the Corcoran,” C-1; Cohen, “‘It Keeps Me Alive’”; Wittenberg, “Alma Thomas: Paintings at Franz Bader Gallery”; Benjamin Forgey, “At 80, Life Can Be Beautiful,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1976, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Laura Pipino, “‘Stickability,’ Sense Formulas for New Career of Artist,” *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, June 13, 1976, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; William Carlton, “Black Artist’s Vibrant Work to be Shown at Museum” (Carlton quotes Sachi Yanari, who curated the exhibit “Alma W. Thomas: A Retrospective of the Paintings,” as having described Thomas’s palette as “joyous”).

⁵⁰⁷ See “Museum Members Gather Tonight for Preview,” 10-C. The following additional critical reviews include reference to Thomas’s age. Byrne, “She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life”; Byrne, “Museum Has New Show,” D-7; Jervis, “Magic Windows of Alma Thomas,” 15; Warren Marr, II, “Alma Thomas: May Crisis Cover Artist,” *The Crisis* 77, no. 5 (May, 1970): 192; Cohen, “Alma Thomas”; “Alma Thomas Paintings Shown,” *The Evening Star*, October 19, 1970, C-9,

Thomas within a lineage of American artists working in the 1960s and 1970s, or analyzed connections between Thomas and other artists. As a result, critics unambiguously made her biography evident to readers, even at the expense of careful analytical formal readings of her paintings.⁵⁰⁸ Critics of Thomas thereby worked

Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Trescott, "The Seasons, The Flowers, The Sea . . . All a Part of Her Paintings," F-3; Mellow, "Expert Abstractions by Alma Thomas," 27; Benjamin Forgey, "A Charming 'Young' Painter," *The Evening Star*, April 27, 1972, C-10, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Shirey, "At 77, She's Made It to the Whitney," C-52; Clark, "From the Kitchen to the Corcoran"; Richard, "First Solo Show at 77: A Joyful Colorist," B-1; Richard, "A Little Art for Everyone at the Corcoran," C-1; Peter Schjeldahl, "Alma W. Thomas," *New York Times*, May 14, 1972, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Bourdon, "Washington Letter," 36; Cohen, "It Keeps Me Alive"; Forgey, "Pretty Good Little Shows Without a Guide"; Wittenberg, "Alma Thomas: Paintings at Franz Bader Gallery"; "Thomas," *Washington Star News*, October 25, 1974, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Forgey, "At 80, Life Can Be Beautiful"; Pipino, "'Stickability,' Sense Formulas for New Career of Artist"; Paul Richard, "The Corcoran's Biennial Show," *Washington Post*, February 25, 1977, B-3, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; "Alma W. Thomas," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 5 (January 1977): 42; Charles North, "Alma Thomas at Martha Jackson," *Art in America* 65, no. 1 (January-February 1977): 125; Glueck, "Art: Studio Museum Exhibits Alma Thomas," C-22; Holland Cotter, "Art: Alma W. Thomas," *New York Times*, September 13, 1998, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Marger, "Teacher as Artist"; Joe Fyfe, "Alma Thomas's Late Blossoms," *Art in America* 90, no. 1 (January 2002): 99.

⁵⁰⁸ Art critics have contemplated the very use of race-based categorization and terminology. Hilton Kramer, for instance, argued that there is a "futility of categorizing contemporary works of art according to the racial origin of the artists who produces them." Hilton Kramer, "Art: Imposition of a Racial Category: '12 Afro-Americans' at Nordness Gallery," *New York Times*, January, 25, 1969, 23. While his comment appears to support the dissociation of biography or personal identity from art creation, in fact, the motivation behind Kramer's comments is unclear in light of later remarks. He repeats this line of criticism in the early 1970s, which fuelled a debate with other critics and historians. In 1970, Kramer wrote an essay criticizing Barry Gaither's use of "black art" as a category of art production. Gaither was and is a pivotal figure in the study of African American art, serving as a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and founding the National Center of Afro-American Artists. A lecturer on African American artists at various universities, Gaither has been instrumental in bringing the importance of African American art creations to the public consciousness. Yet Kramer argued that Gaither's concept of black art was "fundamentally a political conception . . . Implicit in the distinctions Mr. Gaither has drawn . . . is the assumption that 'black art' is to be exempted from the customary application of critical discriminations based on purely artistic values." Hilton Kramer, "'Black Art' and Expedient Politics," *New York Times*, June 7, 1970, 107. Fundamental to Kramer's assertions is that other scholars and critics might examine art solely through a formal lens. The problem with this criticism is that art is rarely, if ever, judged exclusively on its aesthetic content. If anything, critics of Thomas illustrate the fact that the artist's biography are of central concern to many critics.

Art critic David Bourdon opined on the concept of "black art" in *The Village Voice* in 1975 in an essay entitled "The Trouble with Black Art." Bourdon argued that black artists had a dilemma because they felt "compelled to decide whether their art is going to be 'black' or 'mainstream.' If they decide to make 'black' art (images of their people, frequently suffering), they may be accused of turning out parochial works, having more value as propaganda than as art." David Bourdon, "The

across many periods and utilized varying language to convey their impression of the artist and her output. The only constant in their criticism is the underpinning of race-based concerns. Some were overt, others subtle, and many may even have been unintentional. The result, however, is the utilization of recycled ideas and terms to effectively relegate this artist to the periphery of art historical endeavor.⁵⁰⁹

Race and Mark Tobey

Race has been an important, though discreetly provided, dimension of Mark Tobey's criticism. Critics manifested race in his reception through veiled language. The criticism of Tobey thus indicates that while critics refrained from overtly discussing his race, nevertheless, this element of his biography has been an important component in how critics received the artist and his work. In fact, the societal construction of whiteness throughout the twentieth century facilitated critics framing of Tobey as a universal painter. Ruth Frankenberg argues, "White people are 'raced,' just as men are 'gendered.' And in a social context where white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral, it is crucial to look at the 'racialness' of white experience."⁵¹⁰ Tobey plays an ancillary role in this analysis

Trouble with Black Art," *The Village Voice*, August 4, 1975, 73. On the other hand, Bourdon asserts, "Should they choose to enter the 'mainstream,' producing the type of work esteemed by the art world, he may be accused of denying his Afro-American 'heritage,' and charged with making art that is 'irrelevant' to the black community." Ibid. Yet, time and again, various 'mainstream' critics and scholars incorporate race into their criticism and scholarship on nonfigurative paintings produced by African American artists such as Norman Lewis and Alma Thomas.

⁵⁰⁹ Academic focus on Thomas significantly rose in the 1970s and the 1990s. Academics incorporated her into studies of African American and/or women artists working in abstraction or nonfigurative form, inherently underscoring her race and gender.

⁵¹⁰ Frankenberg, *The Social Construction of White Women, Whiteness, Race Matters*, 1.

since critics less overtly recognized race in his reception, and the interpretation of his critical reception relies on subtle implication rather than blatant reference.⁵¹¹

Critics have long esteemed Mark Tobey for his perceived adept insight into universal notions and properties that he translates into paint. Throughout his career, critics have embraced him as a mystical,⁵¹² self-taught and therefore untainted, fresh, mature, brilliant artist.⁵¹³ He has thus entered the annals of art history as a great artist, and critics have upheld his position. By considering the formal properties of his creative output in detail, examining Tobey's influence within the art world, and utilizing laudatory terminology such as "greatest living American artist,"⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ Similarly, Frankenthaler's critics avoided direct reference to her race. Therefore, like Tobey, my discussion of Frankenthaler and race is succinct.

⁵¹² For example, the following critical reviews include specific reference to Tobey as mystical or spiritual. John Russell, "Art: Welcome Tribute to Mark Tobey," *The New York Times*, June 8, 1974, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; "Tobey the Mystic," November 15, 1945; Howard Devree, "Artists of Today: One-Man Shows Include Recent Paintings by Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey," *New York Times*, December 3, 1950, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; John Canady, "Mark Tobey Stands Alone," Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. In a similar vein, John Canady asserted that Tobey, "materialized the ultimate abstraction of human thought." John Canady, *New York Times*, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. In his article entitled "Mark Tobey's Art Offers Solace to the Baffled," Terence Mullaly discussed the "element of enigma" in Tobey's paintings. Mullaly, "Mark Tobey's Art Offers Solace to the Baffled." A *New York World-Telegram* review suggested that his paintings were filled with "deeply religious and philosophical meaning." "Mark Tobey Canvases," *New York World-Telegram*, December 1, 1945, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Kenneth Rexworth described Tobey as a "humane painter," and suggested that "in these paintings Tobey touches the tradition of the Zen landscapes." Kenneth Rexworth, "Mark Tobey of Seattle, Wash.," *Artnews* 50, no. 3 (May 1951): 61. Sylvia Lewis described Tobey as an "elusive artist." Sylvia Lewis, "Exhibit by Mark Tobey Aids Cornish School," Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. James R. Mellow suggested that Tobey's works "invite a good deal of philosophical explanation." James R. Mellow, "Tobey: Modernist with an Oriental Accent," *New York Times*, October 10, 1971, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Furthermore, a *Newsweek* article discussed Tobey's paintings as magical in the article, "Mark Tobey's Earthy Magic."

⁵¹³ Howard Devree argued that Tobey "remains one of the most challenging of contemporary painters and one of our artists of stature." Howard Devree, "An Artist's Growth; Mark Tobey Retrospective at Whitney," *New York Times*, October 7, 1951, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁵¹⁴ Alexander Watt, "Paris Letter: Mark Tobey," *Art in America* 4 (1961): 114.

“powerful,”⁵¹⁵ “bold,”⁵¹⁶ and “an original artist,”⁵¹⁷ critics and scholars have presented and maintained Tobey’s integral place in the history of art, aligning him with influential mid-century avant-garde painters. Critic Alexander Watt best summarizes Tobey’s reception, writing in *Art in America* that the artist’s revered position held among connoisseurs, “has long been shared by this magazine. The 1958 *Art in America* Annual Award ‘for outstanding contribution to American Art’ was given to Tobey. In that same year he also won the top international prize at the Venice Biennale; he was the first American since 1895 . . . to be so honored, and this accelerated interest in American art throughout the world.”⁵¹⁸

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that critics have regarded various aspects of Tobey’s biography, including underachievement, in a positive light. For example, critic Kenneth Rexroth argues that Tobey’s lack of education complements the artist’s deeper desire for knowledge. Rexroth asserts, “Of important artists today, Tobey is one of the most completely self-educated. For this reason he is independently, widely and seriously educated, at home in those provinces of art and thought, distant in time or space, which interest him.”⁵¹⁹ This positive criticism reveals the different ways critics positioned self-educated artists. While critics denigrated certain artists without

⁵¹⁵ Suzanne Burrey, “Mark Tobey,” *Arts Magazine* 32, no. 3 (December 1957): 53.

⁵¹⁶ “Tobey’s Write Writing,” *The Art Digest*, April 1, 1944, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁵¹⁷ David Carrier “New York, Abstract painting and sculpture,” *The Burlington Magazine* CXXXVII, no. 1102 (January 1995): 52.

⁵¹⁸ Watt, “Paris Letter: Mark Tobey,” 114.

⁵¹⁹ Rexworth, “Mark Tobey of Seattle, Wash.,” 17. Further, Henry Seldis, who quoted Rexworth in his article on Tobey, also shines a positive light on Tobey’s choosing educational influences. Henry J. Shields, “Mark Tobey Retrospective Exhibit Heads List of New Shows Now on View in Local Galleries,” August 5, 1951, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

formal education, often interpreting their output as ‘naïve,’ they revered other artists for their self-education. Critics argued that such artists as Tobey maintained a pure vision, free of learned principles inculcated through formal art education. This biographical aspect of Tobey’s life was essential for leading critics to present him as untainted by art establishment ideals and therefore capable of providing unencumbered, sage direction.

A corollary to critics’ acclaim of Tobey is the implication that the artist easily developed his artistic progress and output, representing a natural progression. Critic and philosophy professor David Carrier, for instance, notes,

Greenberg also admired Mark Tobey . . . whose development . . . shows what an enormous distance an American of that generation needed to move in order to become an original artist. The gentle field of marks in Tobey’s mature works may seem to arise very naturally from the imagery of his landscapes and figure studies. But no one knowing only those naturalistic images could imagine how good an abstract painter he became. His flickering fields of colours [sic], less flashy than the work of the other painterly Abstract Expressionists, mark the ‘cool’ end of that tradition.⁵²⁰

The imagery conjured up from this description is that the paint delicately flowed off of Tobey’s hand, naturally adhering itself to the paper or canvas, and marking the creation of a meaningful form. Furthermore, critics compared him to Jackson Pollock, validating Tobey’s works by suggesting that he influenced this major mid-century artist. For example, Emily Genauer wrote of Tobey’s painting *Broadway Norm*, that it was “completely unlike anything any one had done before, very like the huge canvases Pollock would do later.”⁵²¹ This influential role is significant for it

⁵²⁰ Carrier, “New York, Abstract painting and sculpture,” 52.

⁵²¹ Emily Genauer, “Museum Showing Works of ‘White Writing’ Artist,” Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Similarly, his *Washington Post* obituary noted, “Mr. Tobey was said to have had a strong impact on the work of Jackson Pollock.” “Modern Artist

directly aligned Tobey with one of the most successful mid-century American artists. Ironically, this position was also the source of his relegation; his impact on later avant-garde creation inherently distanced him from that output since his role was to direct younger artists like Pollock. He was thus constructed as an older mentor rather than a young, vital artist.

Critics were also willing to overlook uneven qualities in his paintings so as not to dismantle their constructed reputation of a wise Tobey, a position which was preconditioned on his whiteness. Referring to Tobey's artistic interest in sumi painting—a Japanese ink style painting, which the artist produced beginning in 1957⁵²²—*Arts Magazine* contributing editor Suzanne Burrey, for instance, in reviewing these paintings writes, “These sudden shapes in their declaration of motions whirling in space, are too powerful to be identified as ‘signature’: they are varied—sometimes like the tracks of meteors in the dotted pathway of the black stroke; sometimes thick entities, strongly interwoven with grays.”⁵²³ This critic carefully examined Tobey's line, brushstroke, and palette, observing subtle formal nuances that enhanced the appeal of the work.

In spite of such a revered position, Tobey has been the focus of limited academic consideration, and scholars often exclude him from broad surveys. This omission has led to the assertion that he has been the “victim of neglect”⁵²⁴— a

Mark Tobey, 85, Dies,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 1976, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁵²² Wieland Schmied, *Tobey* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959), 81.

⁵²³ Burrey, “Mark Tobey,” 53.

⁵²⁴ William Wilson, “Tobey — Victim of Neglect,” *L.A. Times*, January 7, 1967, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

phrase rarely associated with Norman Lewis or Alma Thomas, who scholars often omit from mid-century consideration. Academic interest in Tobey steadily climbed from the 1950s through the 1980s. The manner of the academic coverage, however, is generally laudatory, presenting Tobey as a mature, mystical, nonfigurative artist whose vision preceded many of the great post-war artists' work as universalist in appeal.

Race and Helen Frankenthaler

Like Tobey, critics read Frankenthaler's output through the lens of her perceived whiteness. Critics treated Frankenthaler's race, though to a lesser extent than Tobey's, as a normative standard, rarely commenting on her race except to occasionally reference and conflate her cultural background as a Jewish American and her class as an independently wealthy woman. Her reception as both white and a marginalized "Other," therefore, relates to the complicated location of Jewish identity within racial consciousness. American Studies and history professor Matthew Jacobson asserts, "Given the shades of meaning attaching to various racial classifications, given the nuances involved as whiteness slips off toward Semitic or Hebrew and back again toward Caucasian, the question is not *are* they white, nor even how white are they, but how have they been both white and Other? What have been the historical terms of their probationary whiteness?"⁵²⁵ Indeed, critics incorporated Frankenthaler's experiences as both white and Other, with her class, into

⁵²⁵ Matthew F. Jacobson, "Looking Jewish, Seeing Jews," in *Theories of Race and Racism*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 241.

the critical reception (discussed in chapter eight), noting with sarcasm her social and financial position, and underscoring her social standing.

Additionally, reflecting a focus on biography, critics delved deeply into Frankenthaler's social position as a wealthy, white woman, and its role on her creativity and output. This component takes on a different tone throughout the late decades of the twentieth century, however, than that of the 1950s. Critic Thomas B. Hess suggests, "In the catty old 1950s, one of her colleagues said that 'Helen's paintings look as if she did them in between the cocktail hour and dinner.' Twenty years later, the slur, which extended to the artist's uptown childhood (Dalton School, Bennington College), has become a compliment."⁵²⁶ Regardless of any transformation in meaning of the same criticism, the aforementioned critique underscores a continued fixation upon the artist's biography to the point that such interest often supersedes formal considerations and her influence on the art world.

Critics of Frankenthaler thus evoked her uptown New York lifestyle to provide nondescript, exaggerated readings of her paintings. Such descriptions reference stereotypes of a wealthy white princess uncommitted to her craft. For example, critic David Rimanelli, in his review of Frankenthaler's exhibition at the Guggenheim in 1998, argued, "the bad ones really suck,"⁵²⁷ but more importantly for the purposes of this analysis, that her life is "as interesting historically as her work."⁵²⁸ Rimanelli devotes precious lines of a short review to mention her uptown

⁵²⁶ Thomas B. Hess, "Abstract Acrylicism," *New York Magazine* (December 8, 1975): 112.

⁵²⁷ David Rimanelli, "Helen Frankenthaler, Guggenheim Museum," *Artforum International* 36 (March 1998): 93.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

lifestyle, and concludes, “Frankenthaler’s work is trapped in the dilemma of being radical enough for the institutionalized avant-garde of her time, but . . . always already passé.”⁵²⁹ Again, underscoring her social standing within a discussion of her work creates the illusion for the reader of a wealthy white heiress who never had to work. Such notions imply that she was probably uncommitted to any line of endeavor, but picked up painting because it seemed like an amusing hobby. The implication is thus: Frankenthaler developed a career that she never really needed in the first place. Even magazines devoted to women’s issues like the *Woman’s Art Journal* are not immune to the language of the 1950s. Critic Phyllis Peet as late as 1999 in a review of Frankenthaler’s prints catalogue raisonné mentioned the artist’s wealth and connections growing up, and again reiterated the fact that Frankenthaler denied any links in her work to feminist imagery.⁵³⁰

Analysis of race within the reception of these artists, therefore, reveals that critics and scholars integrated the construction of race into their writing, confirming its significant role in how they interpreted and analyzed these artists’ output. Although more subtly infused into the writings on Frankenthaler and Tobey, while overtly expressed in those of Lewis and Thomas, nevertheless, critics have incorporated this focus into their readings of the artists’ paintings. Within the trajectory of each artist’s reception, critics and scholars emphasized race at times, while focusing on other components of their identity at other times. However, the history of these centrally positioned, race-based interpretations illuminates that critics fused the artists’ biography into their working methodology and output. Furthermore,

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Phyllis Peet, (Review), *Woman’s Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1999/Winter 2000): 54.

this examination demonstrates that critics and scholars considered race unequally. They delineated a hierarchy in which race was regarded as either a normative standard or a component of identity requiring descriptive analysis, in which critical attention overtly integrated race into critiques. In both cases, critics and scholars presented race as a central and constructed component of identity historically vital to the interpretation of all four artists.

Chapter 8: Gender in the Reception of Nonfigurative Painting

Social Construction of Gender

In this chapter, I assert that gender is socially constructed.⁵³¹ As such, American society's interpretation and understanding of men and women as individuals as well as their roles within society is culturally determined and changes from one historical period to another. Further, like the social construction of race, gender also rarely exists in a vacuum. Instead it incorporates social understanding of other aspects of identity, such as race and class. I address how the altering views on gender throughout the twentieth century affected the criticism of Helen Frankenthaler, Norman Lewis, Alma Thomas, and Mark Tobey. Since feminism has been concerned with the roles, construction, and presentation of males and females in society, I provide an overview of the history of feminism, briefly addressing masculinity studies, before examining Abstract Expressionism in more detail. This established, reigning, mid-twentieth-century art movement categorically determined how critics and scholars, who often prized artists who embodied accepted notions of male virility, constructed, understood, and interpreted these artists.

Lewis and Tobey are important to the discussion of gender within this chapter because society's creation and interpretation of their masculinity affected how critics perceived both their art and their roles as men and artists working in American society. My reading of their work is through the theoretical construction of masculinity studies, as critics rarely directly commented on Lewis and Tobey's sex.

⁵³¹ See footnote 22, in Chapter 1, for sources on the social construction of gender.

Analysis of the criticism, therefore, necessitates my reading of critics' implications, subtleties, and language, rather than explicit reference.

I focus primary attention in this chapter on Frankenthaler, with significant but less concentration on Thomas. Critics were quite overt in their gender-based reading of Frankenthaler's paintings. As for Thomas, critics frequently conflated various aspects of her identity into their readings, combining her race, gender, and class. Nevertheless, critics inevitably asserted that Frankenthaler and Thomas painted in particular ways because of their sex.

Feminism in the United States

A brief overview of feminism's formal history within the United States is important because the concept of feminism as a movement—with ebbs and tides, leaders and followers, messages and themes, doctrines and ideologies—provides context for the four artists' reception in the art world. Their critical reception reveals the shifting attitudes of critics and scholars on gender throughout the twentieth century, a period in which society's construction of gender radically shifted.

Feminism in the United States harkens back to the mid-nineteenth century, and has been divided into three major categories, described metaphorically as waves.⁵³² The first wave started when feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton and

⁵³² Scholars such as Jo Freeman, Linda Nicholson, and Christine Stansell question and challenge the usefulness of the wave concept. For example, in her article "Feminism in 'Waves': Useful Metaphor or Not?" Linda Nicholson argues that the wave metaphor essentializes gender and feminist activism, reducing broad activities and focus to the point that overlooks differences in concepts and motivations. She writes, "In sum, the wave metaphor suggests the idea that gender activism in the history of the United States has been for the most part unified around one set of ideas, and that set of ideas can be called feminism. But as the historical record has increasingly illustrated, that is not how best to understand the past in the United States. The different kinds of activism around gender that have taken place since the early nineteenth century in this country cannot be reduced to one term, feminism."

colleagues wrote the “Declaration of Sentiments” in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York.⁵³³ Scholars Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier assert that the primary concern of first wave feminism was “to gain a legal identity for women that included the right to own property, to sue, to form contracts, and to vote.”⁵³⁴ Further, Dicker and Piepmeier explain that while it is assumed that this wave receded in 1920 with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, in fact, first wave feminists continued their activism in the form of social justice.⁵³⁵

Throughout the 1960s, energized by the civil rights movement, feminists increased their activism and expanded their scope. Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* of 1963 documents the challenges women faced throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a period in which they were socially expected to play the role of content housewife, but in fact, many were unhappy and unfulfilled in this role, despite financial comfort. Friedan illuminated this discrepancy, between the public assertion that women should be satisfied playing the role of homemaker and the reality of the dissatisfaction many such women felt in these roles. The activity of this period comprises the roots of the second wave of feminism. The primary goals of feminists throughout the second wave was to gain “full human rights for women: some of its central demands were equal opportunities in employment and education, access to

Linda Nicholson, “Feminism in ‘Waves’: Useful Metaphor or Not?,” *New Politics* 12, no. 4 (Winter: 2010), <http://newpol.org/node/173>. I find the idea of waves useful, however, as they provide a clear trajectory of feminism in the United States.

⁵³³ Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, “Introduction,” in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, eds. Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 8-9.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

child care and abortion, the eradication of violence against women, and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.”⁵³⁶ Additionally, Dicker and Piepmeier assert, “Second wave activists critiqued the notion of biological or inherent differences between the sexes, contending instead that these differences are socially constructed.”⁵³⁷

However, throughout the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, many marginalized women of color argued that the mainstream women’s movement was a white, middle class concept. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains, “The need to split one’s political energies between two sometimes-opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment which men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific raced *and* gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the entire group.”⁵³⁸ Thus, many feminists of color extended the ideology of the second wave feminist movement. Specifically, “they called for a recognition that identity is intersectional—in other words, that gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality are interlocking and that oppression is not experienced simply along one axis.”⁵³⁹ These points became important components to third wave feminism, which emerged in the late twentieth century. Diversity among women is core to this recent and reformed version of feminism. Dicker and

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 360.

⁵³⁹ Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, “Introduction,” in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, 9.

Piepmeyer argue, “third wave feminism’s political activism on behalf of women’s rights is shaped by—and responds to—a world of global capitalism and information technology, postmodernism and postcolonialism, and environmental degradation . . . Third wavers, who came of age in the late twentieth-century and after, are therefore not simply concerned with ‘women’s issues’ but with a broad range of interlocking topics.”⁵⁴⁰ As such, third wave feminists understand individual identity to be complex, with issues that affect each individual in distinctive ways.⁵⁴¹ Additionally, it incorporates second wave strategies and critiques.⁵⁴²

Focus on gender in the 1970s expanded beyond artistic expression and activism for females. In fact, examination of the social construction of gender allowed for a broadening of its original scope, to incorporate how changing concepts of gender affected lives and perceptions of males. Thus, another important aspect in gender studies, and correlating to women’s studies, is masculinity studies, a critical inquiry present in academia since the 1970s. Like the history of women’s roles in the United States, masculinity studies underscores the social construction of gender, which includes society’s interpretations of men’s roles. Scholars engaged in this critical inquiry examine how “manliness and equality are contingent upon intersecting

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

Feminist art education officially commenced in 1970, with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at the helm. Chicago instructed students in feminist art education at California State University in Fresno, and founded, with Schapiro, the feminist art program at the California Institute of the Arts. With their students, these artists installed *Womanhouse* in 1972 in Los Angeles, a month-long installation probing the private lives of women’s experiences. See Arlene Raven, “Womanhouse,” in *The Power of Feminist Art, The American Movement of the 1970’s, History and Impact*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 48-65.

social conditions, always driven by issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.”⁵⁴³

Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson discuss the complicated, fluid, and relative nature of masculinity. They explain, “the category of ‘masculinity’ should be seen as always ambivalent, always complicated, always dependent on the exigencies of personal and institutional power. Masculinity is realized here not as a monolithic entity, but as an interplay of emotional and intellectual factors—an interplay that directly implicates women as well as men, and is mediated by other social factors, including race, sexuality, nationality, and class.”⁵⁴⁴

Scholars have examined the nuances in gender through masculinity and feminist studies, revealing not only the complicated nature of society’s construction of males and females, but also the fluid aspects of that construction. Additionally, these studies elucidate the expectations gendered roles place upon males and females, and how these understandings frame society’s attitudes about men and women’s roles. Gendered notions permeate American society, altering throughout time and place. As a result, gender has shaped the reception of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, determining how critics see these artists and interpret their paintings.

Abstract Expressionism and Gender

In addition to American society’s changing understanding of the social roles of females and males throughout the twentieth century, significant changes manifested in the art world, many of which reflected shifting societal ideologies. At the end of World War II, Abstract Expressionism emerged as the primary avant-garde

⁵⁴³ Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, “Introduction,” in *Constructing Masculinity*, eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

art movement. While this movement comprised many individual artists with competing ideals and ideas of art-making, it can be generally divided into two major genres: action painting, heralded by art critic Clement Greenberg and represented by artist Jackson Pollock; and gesture painting, advocated by critic Harold Rosenberg. These critics focused on art developments and advancements. However, in many ways, their writings also relate to the subject of gender in America, and particularly, American art.

In the 1950s art world, debates centered around modern art, as well as the connotations of the term “modern.” For many in the American public, particularly those who associated the modern with Cold-War politics, use of the word was offensive. Art historian Ann Gibson explicates in *Issues in Abstract Expressionism* that the director of the Institute of Modern Art in Boston, James S. Plaut, “defended the change of the name of the museum from ‘Modern’ to ‘Contemporary,’ reasoning that to the public, the word ‘modern’ had connotations of obscurity and negativity . . . by the later forties, the words ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ were caught in the fray of cold-war politics. For the average man, ‘modernism’ was akin to communism and totalitarianism.”⁵⁴⁵ Arguments about the use of this word permeated the arts community. Gibson notes, “The word’s polarizing effect is indicated by David Sylvester’s comment in *The Nation* in 1950 that Clement Greenberg’s restriction of the term ‘modern’ to painting of the Cubist order was dictatorial.”⁵⁴⁶ The arguments about its use focused on associations with political unrest and turmoil. Thus even

⁵⁴⁵ Ann Eden Gibson, *Issues in Abstract Expressionism: The Artist-Run Periodicals* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1990), 53.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

members of the arts community questioned modern and abstract art, as potentially undermining the very democratic foundation on which the American ideal was based by presenting nonrepresentational imagery understood and interpreted on a number of political or nonpolitical levels.

However, many critics like Rosenberg supported the gestural aspects of Abstract Expressionism, declaring the canvas to be a ground on which artists could create. On the other hand, others like Greenberg argued for a prioritization of formal values in painting.⁵⁴⁷ In his overview of the environment, art historian Carl Belz compares Rosenberg and Greenberg by quoting their contrasting opinions: “Here, for instance, is Rosenberg: ‘At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an area in which to act – rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined . . .’ And here is Greenberg: ‘A new kind of flatness, one that breathes and pulsates, is the product of the darkened, value-muffled warmth of color.’”⁵⁴⁸

Thus, Rosenberg and Greenberg quintessentially represent the two major and opposing abstract artistic camps. Greenberg supported creations that most closely reflected a painting’s presence as a painted, flat, four-sided surface, rather than as the illusion of a window into another world. He supported a painting’s reference to itself as a two-dimensional object comprising canvas and paint. Rosenberg, on the other hand, was less concerned with painting’s reflection of its presence as a flat surface, and more preoccupied with his search for painting as the expression of an artist’s total

⁵⁴⁷ Carl Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950’s*, exh cat. (Waltham, Massachusetts: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1981), 10.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

immersion in the process of creation. He supported works that most explicitly illuminated the act of applying paint to the canvas.

Competition between European ‘greatness’ and American ‘genius’ also marked the period of Abstract Expressionism. The title of Irving Sandler’s study of Abstract Expressionism, *Triumph of American Painting*, definitively and clearly reflects this competition.⁵⁴⁹ In one title, Sandler thereby asserted the American art world’s claim over new, creative output, and delight in having usurped that role from European art centers. Other scholars and critics writing during this pivotal time echoed Sandler’s satisfaction, marking the United States as the center for the creative enterprise. For example, art historian Robert Rosenblum writes,

American artists in the post-Roosevelt era had miraculously emerged as the torchbearers of not only the best and most inventive of modern art, but also of an art that was universal in character, an art so surprisingly cosmic in scope that issues of nationalism seemed piddling. Not only had the once uneven competition between European and American art apparently and unexpectedly been won by the 1950’s, but it had been won on so grandiosely abstract a level that the search for an American identity seemed an embarrassing memory of a parochial past.⁵⁵⁰

Thus for art historians, critics, and artists of the period, Abstract Expressionism represented pride in national identity by showing the world the creative advancements occurring in the United States. Abstract Expressionism proved to be not only significant for its role as the leading artistic movement of the time, but it also played a

⁵⁴⁹ Robert Rosenblum, “What is American About American Art?” in *On Modern American Art: Selected Essays by Robert Rosenblum* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 11.

See Irving Sandler, *Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

crucial part in the cultural and political arenas, and more specifically in the competition between European and American art and expression.

However, within the center of the mid-century New York art world, key members of Abstract Expressionism were not representative of the American population. In fact, the primary and celebrated figures were white men. Abstract Expressionism has a particularly potent reputation for strictly maintaining its ‘men’s club’ ideology. The movement is described by feminist art historians Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard as having had a “macho mystique.”⁵⁵¹ Michael Leja furthers this observation, explaining that Abstract Expressionism “has been recognized, from its first accounts, as a male domain, ruled by a familiar social construction of ‘masculine’ as tough, aggressive, sweeping, bold. The features of this art most appreciated in the critical and historical literature – scale, action, energy, and so on – are, as T.J. Clark has noted, ‘operators of sexual difference,’ part of an ‘informing metaphors of masculinity.’”⁵⁵² Critics, therefore, commonly interpreted such features as denoting the virility of the creator.

Gender and Helen Frankenthaler

The peripheral position in which critics cast Frankenthaler—not central to any movement, but as a link or follower—ironically, enabled her insertion into the canon of (traditionally male) artists. As such, critics and scholars credited her with developing the initial steps of an art form (Colorfield painting) later developed and

⁵⁵¹ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, “Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Power of Feminist Art, The American Movement of the 1970’s, History and Impact*. eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 13.

⁵⁵² Michael Leja, “Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Gender and Subjectivity,” in *Pollock and After, The Critical Debate*, Second Edition, ed. Francis Francina (London: Routledge, 2000), 349.

honed by male artists. Frankenthaler thereby received recognition, albeit often with pejorative undertones, rarely imparted to female artists of the period.

Broude and Garrard explain in *The Power of Feminist Art* how some female artists in the 1950s were able to attain recognition and praise. They argue that artists such as Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Frankenthaler achieved “unusual visibility and recognition in the art world as ‘second-generation Abstract Expressionists,’ in part because they had cast themselves—and were being cast by critics—as disciples and followers of the innovative male founders of the radical but by then established Abstract Expressionist movement.”⁵⁵³ However, this ‘status’ came at a price. Broude and Garrard continue, “Stereotypes in the critical press as imitators of the styles of men and as jealous rivals for the favors of male mentors, these women had to pay a price for membership even on the peripheries of the all-boys’ club, and that price was isolation.”⁵⁵⁴ Since curators included so few women in exhibitions and group shows, the competition for inclusion and recognition was tremendous. Broude and Garrard suggest that it may not have been to the betterment of a career, however, to openly discuss the situation; challenging the dominant (male) voices would have resulted in isolation.

Art historian Linda Nochlin explains that issues of gender and biological associations between an artist and her art creations are inaccurate social constructions. Nochlin writes,

Women artists are more inward-looking, more delicate and nuanced in their treatment of their medium, it may be asserted . . . Is Fragonard more or less

⁵⁵³ Broude and Garrard, “Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century,” 17.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

feminine that Mme. Vigée-Lebrun? Or is it not more a question of the whole Rococo style of eighteenth-century France being ‘feminine,’ if judged in terms of a binary scale of ‘masculinity’ versus ‘femininity’? . . . if daintiness, delicacy, and preciousness are to be counted as earmarks of a feminine style, there is nothing fragile about Rosa Bonheur’s *Horse Fair*, nor dainty and introverted about Helen Frankenthaler’s giant canvases.⁵⁵⁵

Nochlin argues for the sheer impression of gendered social constructions.

Additionally, she underscores that things ‘feminine’ in art have the implication of being received as maintaining less importance and impact when applied to female artists.

In interviews, Frankenthaler indirectly confronted the correlation between her sex and artistic creations. Asked regularly about what her art reveals and represents with regard to her sex, Frankenthaler commented on the ‘meaning’ of her art, “My answer to that [a question regarding the ‘female quality’ of her art] would be the same as my answer to your question about nature or landscape, and my talking about the *self*. That is, every fact of one’s reality is in one’s work: age, height, weight, history, nationality, religion, sex, pains, habits, attractions, and being female is one of many in this long list for me.”⁵⁵⁶ She clarified her position, noting, “What you call ‘female quality’ is a serious fact that I enjoy, and part of a total working picture.”⁵⁵⁷ Here, Frankenthaler conflated her identity with all aspects of her approach to painting, so that critics could not isolate any one variable, such as gender, and dismiss her work on account of its ‘femininity.’ Thus, in what appears to be an attempt to evade direct

⁵⁵⁵ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Linda Nochlin (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 149.

⁵⁵⁶ Cindy Nemser, “Interview with Helen Frankenthaler,” *Arts Magazine* 46, no. 2 (November 1971): 54.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

recognition of her position as a female artist, Frankenthaler rejected critics' interest in correlating her sex with specific formal aspects present in her painting. She avoided specific connections based on personal traits that might stereotype, categorize, and pigeonhole her. Frankenthaler thus eluded such comparisons between her gender and her art perhaps to decrease direct correlations between 'femininity' and her output.

In spite of her general, evasive replies to such queries, however, critics still read 'femininity' into her work. Frankenthaler's objections to such readings would have been fruitless. Additionally, by eliding the issue, Frankenthaler did not encourage further writing on the subject. As such, she did not contribute to the rhetoric about her identity as a female artist, publically ignoring the issue and instead emphasizing the formal qualities of her paintings.

Leja writes about female Abstract Expressionists and their attempt to eliminate the "self" from painting, explaining "Elaine [de Kooning] and other female Abstract Expressionists were structurally excluded from the construction of subjectivity embedded in the full experience and production of Abstract Expressionist art."⁵⁵⁸ Thus Elaine de Kooning and Frankenthaler, who knew one another and both worked in nonfigurative styles, as mid-century female artists, shared a similar challenge of obscuring or excluding personal aspects that critics interpreted as underscoring their 'femininity.'⁵⁵⁹ In the case of Frankenthaler's stylistic changes, for example, the artist may have shifted her palette and form during the late 1950s

⁵⁵⁸ Leja, "Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Gender and Subjectivity," 357.

⁵⁵⁹ See Anne M. Wagner, "Lee Krasner as L.K.," *Representations* 25 (Winter 1989), 42-57, reprinted in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., (Nashville, TN: Westview Press, 1992), 422-435.

and early 1960s (evident in works such as *Yellow Caterpillar* and *Small's Paradise*, see figures 8 and 9), in order to evade criticism and close, negative correlations between her gender and her output, in the critical form of 'female qualities.'⁵⁶⁰ As such, where critics read the light, muted colors and loose forms and application of paint in her early 1950s paintings as indicative of her sex, her early 1960s style, in which she utilized a bold, deep palette and blockier forms, could be interpreted as a coded expression. Rather than taking a man's name, using her initials instead of her name, or some other form of concealment, Frankenthaler's stylistic alteration may be interpreted as a way for the artist to invite reviews and descriptions that emphasized her works' gender 'neutral'/gender irrelevant qualities. In fact, as the analysis throughout this chapter shows, critics indeed followed the aforementioned course.

However, an overview of her criticism reveals that reviews, articles, and comments about Frankenthaler's position in the history of art either casts her as a follower of Jackson Pollock who expanded upon his ideas; a disciple of Greenberg; and/or a link between the (male) artists of the New York School and the next major movement, Color-Field art, where Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland reigned. Her painting, *Mountains and Sea*, became the marker of a new style. For example, critic James Schuyler noted in an *Art News* 1957 review of an exhibition of Helen Frankenthaler's work, "To sum up at the beginning: it is in work of this quality that the continuity of free abstract painting, the kind associated with Jackson Pollock, is

⁵⁶⁰ Writing in 1970, Carter Ratcliff suggested that Frankenthaler altered her late 1960s work from the previous period as a result of art world anticipation. He wrote, "these paintings seemed executed in response to expectations prepared by her recent work." Carter Ratcliff, "New York Letter," *Art International* 14, no. 1 (January 1970): 95.

found.”⁵⁶¹ Art critic William Berkson noted in a 1965 article, “having taken a clue from Pollock’s blotted calligraphy of 1951-52, she invented what has been called the ‘stain gesture’ in a large, airy painting called *Mountains and Sea*; and there has been no end of reference to the influence it had on at least two painters, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland.”⁵⁶² Also referencing *Mountains and Sea*, art critic Carter Ratcliff, in 1989, wrote, “the canvas has another claim on history. A few months after her show, Greenberg arranged for two painters from Washington, DC, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, to have a look at *Mountains and Sea* at Frankenthaler’s studio. He seems to have felt that this studio visit would change the course of American painting. As it happened he was right.”⁵⁶³ These reviews emphasized influence—either Pollock’s on Frankenthaler, or her painting upon Noland and Louis. In either case, the critics underscored the value of male creation over female innovation, wherein Frankenthaler was inspired by or inspired male artists.

Some, as recent as the 1998 *Artforum* review of a Guggenheim show of her work, for example, attempt to negate her originality. Art critic David Rimanelli wrote in his 1998 *Artforum* article, “Frankenthaler’s innovation wasn’t really innovation:

⁵⁶¹ James Schuyler, “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Art News* 55, no. 10 (February 1957): 11.

⁵⁶² William Berkson, “Poet of the Surface,” *Arts Magazine* 39, no. 9 (May/June, 1965): 49. Additionally, James Mellow, for example, described Frankenthaler’s development of soak-staining, explaining, “while the technique had its inspiration in Pollock’s drip and splatter method, Frankenthaler’s use of pigment thinned with turpentine allowed the color to soak into the raw canvas . . . It was . . . the discovery of this technical device that set Morris Louis off into his own late, grandly scaled abstractions which became so influential for later color-field painting.” James R. Mellow, “New York Letter,” *Art International* 13, no. 5 (May 1969): 56.

⁵⁶³ Carter Ratcliff, “Living Color,” *Vogue* (June 1989): 245. Paul Richard described the importance of *Mountains and Sea* in his 1975 *Washington Post* article, asserting “Important as an example of her work, it is today most famous for the influence that it exerted on two young local painters . . . Kenneth Noland and the late Morris Louis. The sight of the Frankenthaler, both of them agreed, wholly changed their art.” Paul Richard, “A Painting of Influence,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 1975.

CG [Clement Greenberg] had probably alerted her to the way the oil in certain 1951 paintings by Jackson Pollock had seeped into the cotton duck, becoming ‘one’ with it.”⁵⁶⁴ Another 1998 review also assigns her early artistic contributions, developments, individuality, and creativity, to male artists. Art critic Roberta Smith noted, “She had taken Pollock’s dripped-paint technique and de Kooning’s open-ended improvisation, along with Arshile Gorky’s overripe organicity, adding paint thinned to a watery liquid . . . in saturated or pale colors that seemed innately hot and new.”⁵⁶⁵ Again, these critics deemphasized Frankenthaler as a painter in favor of, and in order to, primarily focus upon male artists whose paintings enabled her creativity. Their correlation of Frankenthaler’s output and skill set to other artists’ creativity is not inherently negative. On the contrary, such affiliations can be complimentary. In fact, Frankenthaler commented on her indebtedness to Pollock, and the inspiration she took from de Kooning, Matisse, and others. The negativity of these writings, however, stems from the identification and discussion of Frankenthaler principally in relation to others, stripping her of originality and agency, and positioning her as a passive follower. Frankenthaler was neither a first generation Abstract Expressionist nor a Color-Field artist, and yet her art is rarely considered without direct comparison to members of the movements that preceded and followed her. Critics thereby justified her innovation by directly correlating Frankenthaler’s art to its influence on key Color-Field painters. Hence, critics relegated her to the periphery of creators,

⁵⁶⁴ David Rimaneli, “Helen Frankenthaler, Guggenheim Museum,” *Artforum International* 36 (March 1998): 93.

⁵⁶⁵ Roberta Smith, “Showing the Way to the Vanguard at 23,” *New York Times* (January 16, 1998): E-39.

where she served as a muse, as they deemed her purpose to serve as inspiration to a host of male innovators.

Broude and Garrard illuminate Frankenthaler's position as a bridge between major arts movements, commenting that Frankenthaler's 1952 painting, *Mountains and Sea*,

was given canonical status by Clement Greenberg, when he told of how the experience of seeing it had caused Morris Louis to 'change direction abruptly.' Greenberg positioned Frankenthaler not as the innovative leader of a new school of painting, but as a precursor, a link between the first generation of male Abstract Expressionists and the male painters of the Washington Color School, thereby providing her with the only credentials that would at the time have allowed her inscription, albeit marginally, into the annals of 'his-story.'⁵⁶⁶

Critics validated Frankenthaler's success because of its influence on Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. It is perplexing that Clement Greenberg, who was so enthusiastic about *Mountains and Sea* that he personally escorted Louis to see the work, did not write about Frankenthaler or regularly include her in exhibitions. The compliment that Hans Hofmann paid to Lee Krasner in the late 1930s, proclaiming that her work was so good that one could not believe that it was painted by a female artist, speaks to the view of innovative but lesser female creativity.⁵⁶⁷

Writers have also defined Frankenthaler through her status as "wife-of" Robert Motherwell first, and painter second.⁵⁶⁸ Art critic Jerry Bowles wrote in *Arts Magazine*, for example, "For most of her painting career, Helen Frankenthaler has

⁵⁶⁶ Broude and Garrard, "Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century," 16.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid,13.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 13. Frankenthaler was married to Motherwell from 1958-1971.

labored under the somewhat austere shadow of her more famous husband.”⁵⁶⁹

Another article, in *Time* magazine entitled, “Heiress to a New Tradition: Frankenthaler’s Floating Radiance,” noted, “In Manhattan’s close and somewhat clubby artistic community, nearly everybody knows Helen Frankenthaler as a charmer, a hostess and a presence . . . For the past eleven years, she [Frankenthaler] has been the wife of Robert Motherwell, and in a sense, Helen always seemed in the artistic shadow of her husband and other ‘first generation’ Abstract Expressionists. Thus it came as something of a discovery to learn that Helen really can paint.”⁵⁷⁰

This criticism indicates that while on the one hand critics diminished Frankenthaler’s innovation and impact, on the other, they included her in a major publication or were surprised at her talent. Written in the late 1960s, after her relationship ended with Greenberg, and during her marriage to Motherwell, this article illustrates the positioning of female artists throughout mid-century America; Frankenthaler was critically situated as second to, muse for, or wife of Motherwell.

⁵⁶⁹ Jerry Bowles, “Helen Frankenthaler at the Whitney,” *Arts Magazine* 43, no. 5 (March 1969): 20. Sidney Tillim wrote that Frankenthaler “will dress up a canvas,” and that her subject matter reflects “the influence of her husband, Robert Motherwell.” S[idney] T[illim], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Arts Magazine* 33, no. 8 (May 1959): 56.

⁵⁷⁰ “Heiress to a New Tradition: Frankenthaler’s Floating Radiance,” *Time* 93, no. 13 (March 28, 1969): 64. In line with references to her status as a “charmer” and “hostess,” Fairfield Porter wrote that Frankenthaler “does not seem deeply involved,” asserting “in the large pictures fresh air and good luck are not enough.” F[airfield] P[orter], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Art News* 51, no. 10 (February 1953): 55. Laverne George asserted of Frankenthaler’s paintings, “Perhaps what is needed is less surface-realized growth, a deeper consciousness of why ‘process’ is beautiful or a deeper conviction that it is.” L[averne] G[eorge], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Arts Magazine* 30, no. 6 (March 1956): 58. William Berkson concluded his 1965 article on Frankenthaler by claiming that “she has a sobriety that is uncommon among attractive women . . . both as a painter and a woman, she gives you a sense of luxury, which rougher-edged Bohemians can’t understand and which bourgeois Bohemians . . . resent.” Berkson, “Poet of the Surface,” 50.

Nina Leen's photograph of the New York School in 1951, included only one female (figure 34). It visually reveals the primary obstacles facing female artists in America at midcentury. The only female in the painting is artist Hedda Sterne, who stands behind and above the males in the image, implying Sterne's role to inspire creativity in her male counterparts. This phenomenon extends beyond the perimeter of this picture. Such positioning has been a significant hindrance to female artists: because of their sex, women have been relegated to the periphery of a field dominated by (white) men. Broude and Garrard declare, "Nina Leen's famous documentary photo of 'The Irascibles' says it all . . . Among these fourteen men, whose names are all today a familiar part of the saga of Abstract Expressionism, there is only one woman, the painter Hedda Sterne, about whose work we know only that it had been characterized disparagingly by Clement Greenberg in a review of 1944 as 'a piece of femininity.'"⁵⁷¹

In a 1965 interview with Henry Geldzahler, Frankenthaler provided rare insight into her views of gender discrimination, proclaiming, "I wonder if my pictures are more 'lyrical' (that loaded word!) because I'm a woman. Looking at my paintings as if they were painted by a woman is superficial, a side issue, like looking at Klines and saying they are bohemian. The making of serious painting is difficult and complicated for all serious painters. One must be oneself, whatever."⁵⁷² In spite of her relegation, like Norman Lewis, Frankenthaler was nevertheless deeply

⁵⁷¹ Broude and Garrard, "Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth-century," 16.

⁵⁷² Henry Geldzahler, "Interview with Helen Frankenthaler," *Artforum* 4, no. 2 (October 1965): 39.

involved in the happenings of the art world. She was associated with The Club and knew the major Abstract Expressionist artists and critics.⁵⁷³

Thus, Frankenthaler was a woman who in her early career worked in a field dominated by men, in a movement with a “macho mystique,”⁵⁷⁴ in an idiom described as derivative, and who produced a key work at an early stage in her career that drew significant attention while ushering in an innovative approach to making art. Writer James Schuyler recognized Frankenthaler’s situational dilemma. He wrote in 1960, “the part of Frankenthaler’s special courage was in going against the think-tough and paint-tough grain of New York School abstract painting. Often pale (not weak), soaked in (only sometimes), quickly dwelt upon – she . . . chanced beauty in the simplest and most forthright way.”⁵⁷⁵ Her ‘courage,’ however, led to alienation in two respects. First, not only were female artists relegated to the margins of the Abstract Expressionist movement where leading, key positions were reserved for men, but they were also isolated from each other. As Broude and Garrard indicate,

⁵⁷³ The amount and type of academic coverage on Frankenthaler correlates with her critical reception and exhibitions. E.A. Carmean, Jr. aptly described the art world’s recognition of Frankenthaler, explaining, “Helen Frankenthaler’s work occupies a curious position in the history of recent art. Her paintings have wide recognition . . . Yet, in spite of this exposure, Frankenthaler remains the least known of the major figures in post-War art, in terms of any extended critical discourse. We have very little in the way of detailed and considered analysis of exactly what her art is— what it consists of, how it functions, and in what ways it has developed both formally and thematically.” E.A. Carmean, Jr., “Of Five Paintings by Helen Frankenthaler,” *Art International* 22, no. 4 (1978): 28. Academic interest in Frankenthaler climbed in the 1960s and 1970s, and piqued in the 1980s. Although scholars have written frequently about Frankenthaler, with consideration for the formal properties of her work, they nevertheless generally frame the discussion of her work in terms of gender. As a result, scholars providing a formal analysis of her painting interpret the properties along gendered lines. Paint color and intensity, detail and form, are made to reflect Frankenthaler’s ‘natural’ character as a woman, or are read as her attempt to infuse her work with ‘masculine’ characteristics, including strength, clarity, and resolve.

⁵⁷⁴ See Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, “Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century,” 13.

⁵⁷⁵ Quoted in Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950’s*, 11.

“Women artists of the 1950’s and 1960’s suffered professional isolation not only from one and other, but also from their own history, in an era when women artists of the past had been virtually written out of the history of art.”⁵⁷⁶ Secondly, the manner in which Frankenthaler combined various elements in her paintings also kept her on the periphery of the two major artistic camps, gesturalism and formalism. Frankenthaler fused the two approaches, and as a result, neither of their major critics could fully support her without validating ideas of the other camp.⁵⁷⁷

After Frankenthaler created *Mountains and Sea*, she continued to develop the soak-stain technique, working in a similar manner in many subsequent creations. Critics maintained a pejorative tone in describing works she produced early in her career, in which she employed the same of technique. “Reckless,” “thin,” “uncontrolled,” “uncomposed,” “lacking in impact,” and “too sweet in color,” are just a few descriptive terms that were commonly used to describe Frankenthaler’s early output.⁵⁷⁸ “It was appropriate,”⁵⁷⁹ writes art critic B.H. Friedman in his 1966 *Art*

⁵⁷⁶ Broude and Garrard, “Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century,” 16.

⁵⁷⁷ Rosenberg outright rejected Frankenthaler’s creations, noting that her “compositions fail to develop resistances against which a creative act can take place. The result is a distressing flabbiness . . . of too little out of too much . . . In their lack of purpose, her runs and blots often touch the edge of the absurd.” Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of Art* (New York: Horizon Books, 1972), 65-66. In part due to the manner in which she applied paint to the canvas—in the soak-stain technique, which naturally emphasized the canvas as a primary material of painting—Rosenberg may have associated Frankenthaler’s creations closely with Greenberg’s ideology. Additionally, the fact that she had an intimate and personal relationship with the leading advocate of flatness almost automatically alienated her from Rosenberg’s camp. Greenberg praised her not for her ability as an artist, but for her role as a follower of Pollock and a precursor to Louis, providing him with the raw materials to actively and innovatively create. Greenberg focused his literary support on Pollock and Louis, rather than on Frankenthaler.

⁵⁷⁸ Barbara Rose, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1970), 12. Additionally, Fairfield Porter described Frankenthaler’s paintings as having a “thinness of substance.” P[orter], “Helen Frankenthaler,” 55. Frank O’Hara described her “sensitivity to nature.” F[rank] O’H[ara], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Art News* 53, no. 8 (December 1954): 53. Laverne George asserted that Frankenthaler’s paintings are “too free,” noting, “for some reason their impact is always in danger of flowing across the canvas and out of sight.” G[eorge], “Helen Frankenthaler,” 58. Elaine Gottlieb

News article “that she adopted this particular technique [soak-staining]. It is free, lyrical and feminine—very different from the more insistent and regular rhythms of the best and most typical Pollocks of the late ‘40s and early ‘50s.”⁵⁸⁰ Friedman goes on to note, “indeed, as this kind of art is completely involved with the physical act of painting . . . we recognize a sexual analogy. Her palette, too, is seductive and feminine, often (particularly in the ‘50s).”⁵⁸¹ Friedman’s comments, and the descriptive terms Barbara Rose lists, illuminate the prevalence in art criticism of negative gendered associations. Calling the use of pale pinks and blues commonly used by Frankenthaler’s in the early 1950s seductive and feminine is an unbalanced, nondescript, misuse of terminology.

Furthermore, the general outlook on art during this period, in which ‘tough’ was the laudatory term, reflects the inherent negativity of Rose’s and Friedman’s descriptions.⁵⁸² Critics thus responded somewhat positively to Frankenthaler’s shifting style, evident in her 1960s paintings. She employed broad, bold patches of

commenced her review of Frankenthaler’s work by noting, “the colors are sensitive and the paint thin.” E[laine] G[ottlieb], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Arts Magazine* 32, no. 4 (January 1958): 55.

⁵⁷⁹ B.H. Friedman, “Towards the Total Color Image,” *Art News* 65, no. 4 (Summer 1966): 32.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid. Further, Dore Ashton wrote of Frankenthaler’s criticism, “nearly every criticism of Frankenthaler’s work during the fifteen years she has exhibited professionally incorporates the epithet ‘lyrical.’” Dore Ashton, “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Studio International* 170, no. 868 (August 1965): 52.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid. In a similar vein, Parker Tyler described Frankenthaler’s “main strength” as “her sensuous empire over emergent forms,” and including in his concluding remarks, “her works excite without quite satisfying.” P[arker] T[yler], “Helen Frankenthaler,” *Art News* 54, no. 10 (February 1956): 49. John Russell described a 1971 painting (entitled *Chairman of the Board*) by Frankenthaler as “one of the most seductive paintings in the show.” John Russell, “In 40 Ways, the Big Picture of Helen Frankenthaler,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1983, C-22.

⁵⁸² Belz and Elderfield discuss the term tough as praiseworthy in the 1950s. See Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950’s*, 11 and John Elderfield, *Frankenthaler* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, 1989), 140-141.

well-defined, all-over color, qualities critics interpreted as “cool” and “remote,”⁵⁸³ describing the works as displaying a “hard-edge” and “bold and aggressive tones.”⁵⁸⁴ So while critics described Frankenthaler’s 1950s’ paintings, which demonstrated her interest in pastels and a watercolor-like application of paint, as ‘feminine,’ her 1960s style of simpler compositions and deeper, purer, bolder colors elicited more positive responses. This critical reception, nevertheless, reveals a continuation of gendered language, with critics employing terminology interpreted as aligning with ‘masculine’ attributes.

Exemplifying this trend in her reception, Donald Judd asserted in a 1962 *Arts Magazine* review of her show at the Emmerich Gallery, “these paintings show an improvement, an intensification, of elements of Miss Frankenthaler’s work. There are fewer lines and stains in each work, and these are in greater contrast to one another. Further emphasis on the particular quality of each type of mark has additionally stressed the surface of the paintings.”⁵⁸⁵ Judd also praised the decreased forms. He continued, “The breadth and economy state clearly that the means are sufficient, that they need neither the impact of repetition nor the support of less relevant details.”⁵⁸⁶ Lawrence Campbell’s *Art News* review of Frankenthaler’s Emmerich show poignantly describes the painting qualities that critics acclaimed in the early 1960s. He wrote, “Her work was never clearer nor more mysterious . . . Her clear piercing colors drenched the surfaces and seemed organically part of the

⁵⁸³ L[awrence] C[ampbell], (Review) *Art News* 64, no. 3 (May 1965): 10.

⁵⁸⁴ “Heiress to a New Tradition: Frankenthaler’s Floating Radiance,” 69.

⁵⁸⁵ D[onald] J[udd], “In the Galleries,” *Arts Magazine* 36, no. 4 (January 1962): 38-39.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

paintings. Some were quite cool and remote.”⁵⁸⁷ Critics correlated descriptive terms such as ‘cool,’ ‘hard-edged,’ ‘tough’ and ‘aggressive,’ with intense, bright, saturated colorations, crisp, well-defined outlines, and simplified, sparse paintings, and they ascribed value to this association. Since Frankenthaler incorporated many of these qualities into her paintings beginning in the early 1960s, critics described such works in complimentary terms. She was even included in a list of “cool” painters in Harold Rosenberg’s *Art & Other Serious Matters*.⁵⁸⁸ This particular accolade, presented by a critic who previously disparaged her work, was particularly meaningful.

Helen Frankenthaler’s early reception reveals the infusion of the social constructions of gender into her criticism. Critics’ equation of simplified form and deep palette with masculinity and a pastel palette and looser forms with femininity when painted by a female artist, is an especially potent construct that demonstrates the focus on biography and social associations and values that permeated her reception.

Following her initial reception, critics in the 1970s focused on incorporating Frankenthaler’s paintings into the larger purview of American art. As such, they categorized her works as “landscapes,” and described them as “pastoral” and “lyrical.”⁵⁸⁹ Critics also employed new ways to discount Frankenthaler. John

⁵⁸⁷ C[ampbell], (Review), 10.

⁵⁸⁸ Harold Rosenberg, *Art & Other Serious Matters* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985, 1967), 65.

⁵⁸⁹ For example, Lawrence Alloway wrote in his article entitled, “Frankenthaler as Pastoral,” “her paintings evoke an iconography of landscapes . . . if we agree that impressions of landscape space are generated by her paintings and that they are not views of specific places generalized, the term ‘pastoral’ may serve.” Lawrence Alloway, “Frankenthaler as Pastoral,” *Art News* 70, no. 7 (November 1971): 67-68. Hilton Kramer titled his 1975 article on Frankenthaler, “Art: Lyric Vein in

Russell, for example, asserted, “She is also very cunning indeed at judging precisely the format that best suits each idea.”⁵⁹⁰ Further, the undertone of the 1950s criticism continued through the 1970s, but was phrased in a less overt yet equally offensive manner, demonstrating the constant focus on gender incorporated into the criticism in varying ways. For example, critic Sanford Schwartz wrote, “The young Frankenthaler flirted with many artists without giving herself to any.”⁵⁹¹ Schwartz continued, “From the vantage point of 25 years later, her youthful confidence is attractive, even moving.”⁵⁹² And while the review was written as a positive acclaim, concluding that Frankenthaler “reduces painting to a few alternatives and resolves all of them . . . with a bravura, and frequently monotonous, simplicity,” the critic demeans the artist by employing terms like “flirted” and “attractive,” thereby underscoring Frankenthaler’s body and sexuality. When Schwartz penned this review, Frankenthaler was a 28-year veteran artist with many accomplishments. The use of these terms harkens back to the 1950s categorization of Frankenthaler as a hostess rather than a serious painter.⁵⁹³

Frankenthaler Paintings,” thus underscoring this categorizing tendency. Hilton Kramer, “Art: Lyric Vein in Frankenthaler Paintings,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1975, 21.

⁵⁹⁰ John Russell, “Art: Helen Frankenthaler at Corcoran,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1975, 20.

⁵⁹¹ Sanford Schwartz, “Helen Frankenthaler at Emmerich,” *Art in America* 66, no. 3 (May/June 1978): 115.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Also evoking earlier criticism about Frankenthaler as hostess, John Russell concludes his 1975 article on Frankenthaler’s paintings by noting, “they convey a sense of fulfillment that makes us feel a good 10 pounds lighter when we walk down the grand staircase and out the door.” Russell, “Art: Helen Frankenthaler at Corcoran,” 20. Even if intended to be complimentary in nature, Russell’s particular choice of words taps into and thus perpetuates earlier pejorative comments about Frankenthaler.

In the 1980s, as Frankenthaler created new paintings and explored various styles and formats, critics often commented on both her recent work and the reception throughout her career-at-large, providing context to her reception. In 1981, Belz reexamined the buzzwords of the 1950s, and explained that during this period, the art world prized “muscular paint application at the start of the decade and cool-headed lucidity at its end.”⁵⁹⁴ Elderfield proclaimed in *Art in America* in 1982 that had Frankenthaler “stopped painting in 1959, her reputation would already have been secured.” Other critics during the 1980s spoke of her solidified position in the arts community based on her influence on later male artists, again perpetuating early 1950s critical rhetoric. They also addressed male artists and members of the arts community who influenced her. For instance, Hilton Kramer defined Frankenthaler by her relationship with Clement Greenberg, a mode of critique that was clearly carried over from the very first reviews of her work in the 1950s. Furthermore, the critic claimed that after Frankenthaler met Pollock, “her own style was formed” but “under Pollock’s influence.”⁵⁹⁵

Throughout the 1980s, critics continued use of a gender specific language to describe Frankenthaler. Kramer, though perhaps attempting to positively associate Frankenthaler’s 1950s works with Abstract Expressionism, proclaimed of her paintings, “It was as if Abstract Expressionism had been put on a diet.”⁵⁹⁶ Further, he

⁵⁹⁴ Carl Belz, “Helen Frankenthaler’s *Eden*, A ‘joyously involved creativity,’” *Art News* 80, no. 5 (May 1981): 157.

⁵⁹⁵ Hilton Kramer, “Helen Frankenthaler’s Art in the 50’s,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1981, D-31.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

described her paintings as “lighter, slimmer, and more quickly legible.”⁵⁹⁷ Michael Brenson, also writing for the *New York Times* in the early 1980s, argued “For more than 30 years, Helen Frankenthaler has been creating paintings that walk a tightrope between spontaneity and self-consciousness, improvisation and deliberation, dissolution and structure.”⁵⁹⁸ The critic continued, “her paintings are less heroic, less intense, more interior than those of Pollock and Willem de Kooning.”⁵⁹⁹ And finally, of the fifteen paintings in the Emmerich Gallery show he reviewed, Brenson claimed that the works imply “interior landscapes and private chambers.”⁶⁰⁰ This type of criticism conjures up imagery of a bedroom or boudoir, a private, perhaps sexualized space, and therefore represents an updated version of the sexualized connotations prevalent in her earlier criticism.

Also during this period, Frankenthaler continued her career-long trend of refusing to comment on gender in interviews. Art critic Deborah Solomon addressed this unwillingness in 1989, grouping the artist with other female artists, “Frankenthaler, like most women artists, is reluctant to define her achievements on the basis of gender.”⁶⁰¹ The way in which Solomon phrased Frankenthaler’s refusal to comment on gender, however, is curious, for the artist would have no need to

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Michael Brenson, “Art: The Tightrope Helen Frankenthaler Walks,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1983, C-30.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Deborah Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1989, 33. In an interview between Helen Frankenthaler and Frances Lear, Frankenthaler also refused to discuss gender. Instead, she resorted to abstract, philosophical ideas when confronted with questions or comments about gender. See Frances Lear, “Lunch,” *Lear’s* (November/December 1988): 31-32, 34.

“define” her accomplishments by gender. Furthermore, Solomon, perhaps unintentionally, began her article on Frankenthaler in a way comparable to Alma Thomas’s critics; she rehashes the stereotypes and assumptions about the artist in the very first few sentences, so that the reader’s view is completely tainted from the start.⁶⁰² While critiques on Thomas regularly begin by highlighting her race, age, physical state, or sex, those on Frankenthaler often commence, like Solomon’s, with allusions to her class, physical attractiveness, and sex. Solomon and other critics imply that Frankenthaler’s success is attributable to her wealth, physical appearance, and associations with well-connected men. Finally, Solomon, too, adopts earlier tendencies of critics—she uses gendered terminology to describe aspects of Frankenthaler’s paintings, noting her palette is “delicate,”⁶⁰³ and that the artist “couldn’t go beyond her own innovations and yet she’s not trapped by them either.”⁶⁰⁴

Carter Ratcliff, too, employed similar terminology. He wrote the “flagrant beauty of her paintings made the 1950’s a difficult time for her,”⁶⁰⁵ and with seeming understanding but refusal to alter the state of critique surrounding Frankenthaler, Ratcliff proclaims, “Of course, those forbidden adjectives were precisely the ones that

⁶⁰² At the start of her article on Frankenthaler, Solomon notes Frankenthaler’s physical appearance, describing her as a “thin attractive woman” and includes comments about her home, “an Upper East side townhouse” that is a “model of genteel taste.” Solomon, “Artful Survivor,” 33.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Ratcliff, “Living Color,” 246.

have always been applied to Frankenthaler's work."⁶⁰⁶ Such debilitating descriptions define Frankenthaler's work because critics continue to employ them.

Finally, in the very late 1980s, Amei Wallach pointed out several ironies in the criticism and canonization of Frankenthaler. Wallach explains that in the winter of 1988/1989, Frankenthaler assumed the title of "greatest living woman artist," so inherited from Georgia O'Keeffe and Louise Nevelson. With great irony, Wallach asserts, "There is not a greatest living man artist, of course, and to even suggest one seems absurd. The whole point of this kind of competition in art is dumb . . . But curators, historians, collectors, and dealers are intent on making women battle it out among themselves, as if, like women athletes, they could never compete with the big guys on their own turf. The thing is, Helen Frankenthaler has."⁶⁰⁷ The critic explains that throughout their reception, female artists, regardless of their contributions, have been marginalized. As such, critics and historians maintain the aforementioned constructions of female artists as muses. Wallach continues, "Helen Frankenthaler at the very least serves as an example of how the rules have been skewed against women. In those art history books that have only recently been rewritten to include women, men usually win on the grounds of creativity as the ground-breakers; they are the ones who make the breakthroughs. The women are the interpreters, the solidifiers. They keep the home fires burning, while the men ignite them."⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Amei Wallach, "Arts and Craftiness," *Ms.* 1-2, (July 18, 1989): 24.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

Wallach also discusses Frankenthaler's direct involvement in the development of her own career. For example, Frankenthaler chose male mentors throughout her life, revealed in the fact that she selected John Elderfield to write her monograph, and she was actively involved in the development of the book.⁶⁰⁹ Wallach denotes Frankenthaler's agency. She concludes her article by explaining to readers that Frankenthaler "has become the greatest living woman artist in part for her longevity."⁶¹⁰

Though writing about Frankenthaler specifically, Wallach's comments bear weight when considering Thomas's reception, as well. With restricted space in the public consciousness for promotion and support of female artists, and since Thomas had such a short career, perhaps this brief career relates to her limited reception. This notion of quota filling and special, reserved—albeit limited—attention for female artists reveals critics' different criteria and expectations of female artists in comparison to their male counterparts. In this scenario, critics would reserve critical positions for some female artists, while primarily focusing on the contributions of male artists.

Critics of Frankenthaler's works throughout the 1990s incorporated commentary on the trajectory of the artist's career and legacy, in a similar fashion to the reception during the previous decade. They integrated earlier terminology and personal biography into their critiques. For instance, Holland Cotter writes in 1992, "Because Ms. Frankenthaler works on a heroic scale, the work has tended to look 'important,' though in fact it got by largely on elegance and seemingly effortless

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

charm.”⁶¹¹ This particular statement, though clearly a bit trite, is not entirely overt in its disdain for the artist and her work. “Effortlessness,” for instance, could be a compliment in some circles. His comments are relatively non-gender specific, yet exhibit the critic’s interest in admonishing the artist for her known personal elegance and high social status.

Cotter is more overt in the subsequent sentences, however. Removing all agency from Frankenthaler, the critic argues, it is “as if the paint itself was making the expressive decisions”⁶¹² concluding “little of that charm is in evidence in her recent paintings”⁶¹³ and that the result “could be one of Jackson Pollock’s bad dreams.”⁶¹⁴ Cotter’s choice to use the term “charm” with regard to Frankenthaler’s paintings is a direct borrowing of previous criticism. Again, he exemplifies the tendency of critics on Frankenthaler to utilize less descriptive terminology in favor of nondescript and particular terms which lack clarity and interpretive meaning, in favor of gendered terms, in this case, suggesting seduction. Applying it to Frankenthaler further alludes to her status as a white woman.

Throughout fifty years of critique, Frankenthaler has been described time and again in the same vein, with critics employing recycled terminology. Although much of her work has been considered in depth in comparison to Thomas, many of the critics chose terms that lack descriptive components. They opted instead for gender- and value-laden descriptions that conjure up an image of a wealthy, beautiful, Park

⁶¹¹ Holland Cotter, “Art in Review: Helen Frankenthaler,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1992, C-23.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

Avenue heiress who amused herself with her paintings, and now and again, haphazardly created something that male artists could better elaborate upon in their work. E.A. Carmean, Jr. argued in 1978 that in spite of Frankenthaler's exposure, she nevertheless was a little-known significant post-War artist, noting, "We have very little in the way of detailed and considered analysis of exactly what her art is,"⁶¹⁵ noting the "absence of a significant body of critical literature."⁶¹⁶ In many respects, this observation remains apt.

Gender and Alma Thomas

While lesser known than Frankenthaler, and with a shorter career, nevertheless, critics discussed Thomas's work frequently. Time and again, however, the analyses are superficial, touting her accomplishment at earning any recognition at all considering that she was an elderly, African American female artist, thus neglecting to provide a detailed formal analysis with serious consideration of her paintings. Since I analyzed Thomas's critical reception at length in the previous chapter, and as critics primarily focused on her race and age, the following section on Thomas and gender is relatively succinct.

Thomas's criticism contrasts with that of Frankenthaler. The general nature of Frankenthaler's critical reception is straightforward, if not blunt, in which the critics often overtly incorporated both Frankenthaler's sex and class into their examination of her work and career development. And while most critiques are imbued with

⁶¹⁵ E.A. Carmean, Jr., "Of Five Paintings by Helen Frankenthaler," *Art International* 23, no. 4 (1978): 28.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

gendered terminology, critics attempted to consider and formally analyze the artist's paintings. Additionally, critics discussed Frankenthaler's position within the larger framework of art history, and revealed both her influences, and those whom she influenced. This approach contrasts significantly with critical consideration of Thomas. A glaring omission from Thomas's criticism is the influence her work has had on future generations of artists.⁶¹⁷

Thus, the criticism of Thomas's paintings is marked by several, distinct characteristics. Critics described Thomas as a passive participant in her own artistic choices and the development of her career, denying her agency and instead portraying the artist as an individual who arbitrarily discovered a nonfigurative painting style. As a corollary to this concept, and secondly, critics similarly dismissed Thomas's relevance to the art scene, citing either her advanced age or some inherent 'naïveté.' As such, they depicted Thomas as incapable of maintaining a contemporary outlook for a substantial period. Third, critics focused primarily on Thomas's biography rather than her artworks, rarely describing her paintings in detail, and omitting a discussion of the development and progression of her artistic style. And finally,

⁶¹⁷ Critics focus on many similar points in evaluating Frankenthaler and Thomas. First, critics rarely refer to either artist simply by last name, as they generally do with male artists. Instead, they employ the prefix of Ms. or Miss. Next, both of these artists are regularly dismissed on account of age; early in her career, Frankenthaler was described as youthful, and by extension "naïve." Critics rarely discussed her in light of her youthful foresight. Thomas, too, was denigrated due to age; hers, however, is the mirror image of Frankenthaler's. Rather than being prized for her wisdom from a lifetime of experience, critics described Thomas as youthful in outlook even at her advanced age.

Differences, too, exist in the criticism of these artists. First, unlike discussion of Thomas, critics analyze Frankenthaler's work in depth, carefully addressing the formal properties of her painting. Next, critics have written about Frankenthaler more frequently than Thomas. Thirdly, Frankenthaler has been evaluated by leading mid-century critics writing for major arts magazines, such as *Art News*, *Art International*, and the *New York Times*. Thomas, though considered on occasion by influential critics such as Paul Richard of the *Washington Post*, was reviewed in a regional context, with little interest in general by critics working for leading arts magazines.

although critics were quick to cite Thomas's influences, they make few references to her impact within the art world. These tendencies share a common denominator of gender, as critics subscribed to gendered notions wherein they denied agency to female artists such as Thomas (and Frankenthaler) in a variety of ways.

Critics writing on Thomas conflated her age, race, gender, and physical condition in their descriptions. Remarking on the irony of expectations about her sex, and perhaps race and age, Jacqueline Trescott, for example, writes of Thomas in *The Sunday Star*, "Walking to the door, the septuagenarian laughs about the art students who guess that she must be a young man painting the joyful canvases."⁶¹⁸ James R. Mellow, seemingly astonished that Thomas painted as well as she did, wrote that she was a "77-year-old retired black teacher and artist . . . but the paintings themselves are expert abstractions, tachiste in style, faultless in their handling of color . . . what one wonders about is the amazing ease with which an elderly woman—born in the 'horse and buggy days' as Miss Thomas says—has embraced total abstraction."⁶¹⁹ These critics reveal the central concern with Thomas's biography rather than her actual paintings. Their critiques usurped attention and directed the reader away from the formal characteristics of her paintings to her biography. Even in an attempt to offer praise for the artist, critics maintained this tendency; David Bourdon, for instance, commented on her sex and age, "Who would have guessed that Alma Thomas, at the age of 77, would be the undisputed doyenne of Washington color

⁶¹⁸ Jacqueline Trescott, "The Seasons, The Flowers, The Sea . . . All a Part of Her Paintings," *The Sunday Star*, August 29, 1971, F-3, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁶¹⁹ James R. Mellow, "Expert Abstractions by Alma Thomas," *New York Times*, April 29, 1972, 27.

painting?”⁶²⁰ This type of reaction is common in the reception; critics were shocked that Thomas was able to adopt such a contemporary viewpoint in her paintings.⁶²¹

Thomas and Frankenthaler thus faced distinct challenges with regard to critical reception. Both were, and continue to be, marginalized, but in different ways. Political historian Zillah Eisenstein, writing in *The Color of Gender* in the early 1990s, proclaimed, “Women are located in various societies and cultures and differ by race, economic class, sexual preference . . . But there are also connections . . . As long as one remembers that no view of gender is total and complete, it is important to call political attention to it. However differentiated gender may be, gender oppression exists. The dynamics and contexts of the oppression can shift, taking on different meanings, but it is still oppression.”⁶²² Indeed, the arts community constructed and interpreted Frankenthaler and Thomas differently, and these viewpoints transformed over the decades as evidenced by the changes in critical language and consideration, but the common denominator is both gender and the social construction of their sex.

Social Construction of Masculinity

The social construction of masculinity is also highly nuanced and dependent upon intersectional issues such as race, class, and sexuality. In this context, I briefly address here how the social construction of Lewis as an African American,

⁶²⁰ David Bourdon, “Washington Letter,” *Art International* 16, no. 10 (December 1972): 36.

⁶²¹ Mary Margaret Byrne notes Thomas’s age in this vein in her article for *The Columbus Enquirer* in 1973. Mary Margaret Byrne, “She Has Contemporary Approach to Painting, Life,” *The Columbus Enquirer*, March 15, 1973, Alma Thomas Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁶²² Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Color of Gender: Reimagining Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 8.

heterosexual, working-class male artist, was different and yet aligned with that of Tobey, a white, homosexual, middle-class male artist. The ways in which the American culture interpreted these varying aspects of both artists was distinctive, albeit opaquely referenced in the critical reception. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic describe the significance of society in forming ideas and expectations about gender, explaining, “The stereotype of the ideal man is forceful, militaristic, hypercompetitive, risk-taking, not particularly interested in culture and the arts, protective of his woman, heedless of nature, and so on.”⁶²³ Exposing the fine distinctions in this social construction, however, Delgado and Stefancic also assert, “But the social construction of men of color is even more troublesome and confining than that of men in general. Men of color are constructed as criminal, violent, lascivious, irresponsible, and not particularly smart.”⁶²⁴ These types of stereotypes and expectations permeated society throughout the twentieth century, with images of men of color changing, each of which underscored a variety of stereotypical aspects. Delgado and Stefancic overview some prevalent depictions, noting, “Early in our history, minstrel shows depicted African-American men as slow-witted, lazy, happy-go-lucky creatures fawning on the goodwill of their masters . . . Jim Crow, added singing and shuffle-dancing to blackface minstrelsy, furthering the image of the happy, childlike slave.”⁶²⁵ The authors argue that these depictions altered during Reconstruction. During this period, the sexuality of freed African Americans became

⁶²³ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, “Minority Men, Misery, and the Marketplace of Ideas,” in *Constructing Masculinity*, eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 211.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 213.

of central importance. They declared, “Tacit acceptance of miscegenation during slavery, justified by the economic necessity to create more workers, reversed itself into fear of race pollution—black men sexually overpowering white women.”⁶²⁶

These images discussed within this brief overview did not disappear from American consciousness once they were no longer overtly depicted in public. On the contrary, they remain a part of perception and, in turn, an aspect of the reception based on gender and race.

How Lewis and Tobey either lived up to these stereotypes, or defied them, broadens the context in which to analyze how critics received the artists and their work; it relates to society’s expectations about their behavior, and their art production. The criticism of Lewis and Tobey demonstrates, however, the shifting nature of society; critics focused on different aspects of their identity throughout their careers.

In general, the art world distanced Lewis from the core progressive, avant-garde groups in two particularly potent and contrasting ways. First, critics and scholars asserted that his innovative, nonfigurative creations underscored his identity as an African American man and his active support for civil rights. In this sense, many critics focused on how Lewis could not distance his political involvement from his creative output. By interpreting his palette, for example, as an extension or expression of his racial identity, critics denied his ability to produce purely formal paintings. Furthermore, they reinscribed his identity as an African American man into his nonfigurative paintings, thereby effectively reminding the reader to integrate stereotypical notions about Lewis into the reception of his works.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 213-214.

Next, critics employed specifically gendered terms to describe his paintings. In contrast to constructing Lewis as an aggressive African American man, some critics associated the artist and his output with perceived ‘feminine’ and ‘homosexual’ characteristics. Ironically, in their distancing of Lewis from stereotypes about African American men, they also effectively dissociated the artist from the very features so valued at midcentury—signifiers of virility in art, such as interpreted violent and aggressive qualities.

Throughout the history of Lewis’s reception, critics regularly referred to his paintings as “lyrical”⁶²⁷ (a term critics also often used to describe Frankenthaler’s paintings), and utilized terminology such as “delicate,” “thin,” or “frail,”⁶²⁸ and “elegant,” “sensitive,” or “decorative.”⁶²⁹ These coded terms thereby constructed

⁶²⁷ The following critical reviews incorporated “lyrical” or “lyric” to describe Lewis’s paintings. Henry McBride, “Attractions in the Galleries: Willard Gallery,” *New York Sun*, March 4, 1949, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Charles Corwin, “Life Magazine’s Art Spread and Norman Lewis, Tromka Shows,” April 10, 1950, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; “About Art and Artists: 29th Show,” Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; *New York Times*, November 11, 1951, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; *New York Times*, February 17, 1957, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Hilton Kramer, “Art: Imposition of a Racial Category: ‘12 Afro-Americans’ at Nordness Gallery,” *New York Times*, January, 25, 1969,” 23.

⁶²⁸ The following critical reviews incorporated “delicate,” “thin,” or “frail,” to describe Lewis’s paintings. “Fragile,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1950, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; *New York Times*, November 11, 1951; *New York Times*, 1952, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; “Norman Lewis,” *Art News* (November 1952), Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; “Norman Lewis,” *Art News* (1954), Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Grady T. Turner, “Norman Lewis at June Kelly, Bill Hodges and the Studio Museum,” *Art in America* (January 1999): 105.

⁶²⁹ The following critical reviews incorporated “elegant,” “sensitive,” or “decorative,” to describe Lewis’s paintings. Charles Corwin, “Frasconi-Talented, Socially Conscious Artist: Also Exhibits by Ben-Zion, Norman Lewis, Gilbert Adrian,” *Daily Worker*, March 18, 1949, Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; “Abstractions by Norman Lewis,” *Art Digest* (April 1950), Norman Lewis Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Corwin, “Life Magazine’s Art Spread and Norman Lewis, Tromka Shows”; “About Art and Artists: 29th Show”; Kramer, “Art: Imposition of a Racial Category,” 23.

Lewis and his works as effeminate, and distanced him from the esteemed mid-century tough, and therefore ‘masculine,’ artistic individuality. The connotations of such terminology were especially damaging, as critics during this period carefully monitored signs and symbols in art, with concern about potential implications of homosexuality in the objects. As such, Christopher Reed notes, “Critics favorable to Abstract Expressionism strained to generate heroic rhetorics of artistic accomplishment and ruthlessly policed the new art for signs of effeminacy.”⁶³⁰ Thus in describing Lewis’s work, with the implications of soft delicacy, critics constructed him in a manner that directly contrasted the ultra-masculine, rough persona so prized during this period. Their categorization of his output as antithetical to perceived and supported ‘masculine’ characteristics in art utilized a binary opposition to align the artist with apparent ‘feminine’ or ‘homosexual’ qualities. In either case, they detached Lewis from the center of avant-garde activity and denied him coveted membership in the highly regulated art world elite.

Like Lewis, analysis of Mark Tobey’s reception through the lens of gender reveals that his critics may have been similarly concerned with distancing the artist from the avant-garde through stereotypes about, and constructions of, homosexuality. While critics and scholars imbued Tobey’s paintings with the ability to signify a universal ideology, as he moved through his life and subtly revealed both his homosexuality and less competitive, highly artistic nature, critics also dissociated him from their revering attention reserved for mid-century male artists who better represented their artistic and social expectations. Such opaque constructions of

⁶³⁰ Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 152.

Tobey may account for his important, yet never integral, position in mid-century avant-garde art circles.

The terms of his reception are detrimental when considering the mid-century social context. This was a period in which the art world reflected society-at-large with regard to the policing of perceived homosexual behavior. For example, Christopher Reed explains,

In America in 1955, the small city of Boise, Idaho, mounted a nationally publicized search for homosexuals during which the police interrogated 1,400 local residents. During the 1950s, expulsions of American military personnel for homosexuality trebled to over 3,000 men and women annually. . . . the American government at this period linked homosexuality to Communism with rules that barred people with histories of either affiliation from employment in the government or in firms that contracted with the government, categories that included over 20 percent of all jobs.⁶³¹

Study of the art world during this time reveals similar homophobic activity, affecting artists' self-expression and output. Reed notes, "In the postwar art world, the stakes—and risks—were highest for artists competing for avant-garde status. Returning to patterns established earlier in the century . . . artists camouflaged their homosexuality with other forms of minority identification and generated complex symbols that masked too-obvious forms of self-revelation."⁶³² Within the Abstract Expressionist movement, artistic expression was highly regulated, as well. In fact, Reed asserts, "Proscriptions against homosexuality were explicit. The constitution of

⁶³¹ Ibid., 151.

⁶³² Ibid., 153.

the Artists' Club, for example, founded by the leading Abstract-Expressionist artists, excluded from membership homosexuals along with critics and women."⁶³³

Thus, the manner in which Clement Greenberg addressed Tobey, complimentary yet detached in that support, characterizes much of the critical approach to the artist. And the artist's sexuality may have accounted for the reservation. Reed explicates that while Greenberg praised Tobey's output, in fact, "Greenberg grew anxious about what he saw as Tobey's limitation to 'a very narrow compass of sensations' and quickly abandoned Tobey's art of 'evasion,' which he compared to the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore."⁶³⁴ Furthermore, Reed concludes, "The terms of Greenberg's abandonment of Tobey are not overtly homophobic any more than Tobey was openly homosexual. But Greenberg's implication that Tobey's abstraction hides a feminine secret, alien to the power of a masculine 'us,' typifies the rhetoric of the American avant-garde."⁶³⁵ Such alignment with perceived 'feminine' characteristics and by extension, distance from powerful and 'masculine' associations, thereby relegated Tobey to the margins of the mid-century avant-garde creation. Critics marginalized Tobey, like the other three artists considered herein,⁶³⁶ on account of the social construction of his identity, for Tobey's

⁶³³ Ibid, 151-152.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Mimi Marinucci explains that there is, in fact, a significant intersection between feminist analysis and sexuality studies. She notes, "There is an unmistakable sense of solidarity linking concern about women's issues and concern about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues . . . this solidarity seems born of a deep understanding that the oppression of women and the suppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender existence are deeply intertwined." Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection Between Queer and Feminist Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 106.

biography challenged the coveted ideas about the qualities intrinsic to mid-century art creators.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that race- and gender-based readings of Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey's art are prolific. Since the commencement of their careers, critics and scholars have utilized, often consciously, constructions of race and gender as a prism through which to interpret their artistic output. The examination of the nuanced ways critics and scholars comprehended their output, thereby constructing the reception of both the artists and their art works, presents a clear and crucial appreciation of the mechanics of race, gender, and relegation in the reception of four diverse artists working in the mid-century American art world. Discussing the importance of such clarity, Kimberlé Crenshaw asserts, "To say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that that category has no significance in our world. On the contrary, a large and continuing project for subordinated people . . . is thinking about the way in which power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others."⁶³⁷ Indeed, this dissertation has illuminated the structures of power inherent in categories of identity, and the ways hierarchies are used and manipulated to both integrate and relegate artists to the margins.

Furthermore, this study underscores the fact that critics and scholars often align race and gender with class, age, and sexuality, thereby forming an intersectional approach to interpreting these artists and their output, and the specific conditions of their marginalization. Distinguishing these subtle differences in the criticism and

⁶³⁷ Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 375.

scholarship reveals the complicated nature of reception, and the significance of probing the art world's responses to Frankenthaler, Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey. Crenshaw suggests, "Recognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of talking about categories at all."⁶³⁸ While this project has primarily concentrated on race and gender, so as to incisively explore these elements in the reception, it has shown the importance of integrating additional components of identity in order to articulate the details of the artists' marginalization, both complicating and clarifying the nuances of their reception.

Critics and scholars constructed Frankenthaler as a wealthy, dainty heiress whose commitment to her craft was superfluous. Lewis's race was central to his reception, with critics and scholars infusing various race-based stereotypes into their interpretations of his artwork, combining these ideas with notions about his sex, class, and sexuality. They concentrated on Thomas's age, race, and sex, conflating these components of her identity in multiple ways as they described her output. And finally, critics and scholars read Tobey through the lens of race, sex, and sexuality, emphasizing his wisdom as a white man in imbuing his works with universal meaning on the one hand, and yet subtly focusing on his limited influence, likely due to his sexual orientation, on the other. This reception demonstrates that critics and scholars emphasized different aspects of the artists' identities, to varying degrees, throughout the decades of their careers. Additionally, the components of the art world influenced one another. This dissertation has thereby established that not only have race and

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 377.

gender remained core factors in how critics and scholars examined these artists, but these elements also changed and morphed as the art world recycled them in different ways from the mid-twentieth century onward. However, the fact that race- and gender-based concerns permeated the readings of these artists, who represent both a range of personal lifestyles and idioms, shows the extent to which identity was a core value for twentieth-century critics and scholars.

One manifestation and marker of critical and scholarly reception is the discrepancy in auction market sales. Though also manipulated and part of a larger equation of reception, the auction market reveals the public perception of the artists, a view often built upon artistic reputations as established, in part, by critics and scholars. Indeed, the auction market demonstrates that, “money is a powerful symbol of cultural worth.”⁶³⁹

The article in *The Economist* entitled, “Post-war artists at auction: The price of being female,” focuses on the market reception of female artists, with the author quoting a Christie’s official as noting, “Attitudes are changing generationally . . . There will be some remedial catch up before women artists have parity on prices.”⁶⁴⁰ However, as this dissertation has determined, this point is salient with artists who have been relegated to the sidelines on account of a variety of factors in addition to sex, including, race, sexuality, and age. Jerry Saltz’s staggering statistic in 2007 about the Museum of Modern Art’s display in its then new building of painting and sculpture created between 1879 and 1969, adds sway to the aforementioned auction

⁶³⁹ S.T., “Post-war artists at auction: The price of being female,” *The Economist*, May 20, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21555730>.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

market discussion. He notes, “By the fall of 2006—after two years, and substantial tinkering— there were 399 objects on view; 19 were by women, or 5 percent.”⁶⁴¹ Further, in a 2009 *The Art Newspaper* article entitled “African American art still needs support,” Kinshasha Holman Conwill proclaims, “There was a time not long ago when one could visit major museums or attend international fairs and rarely find works by African American artists. Their work was still rarer at auctions and those few there were, were not commanding the prices commensurate with their cultural significance nor competitive with their non-African American counterparts.”⁶⁴² And Philip Kennicott asserts of homosexuality in the art world, that while it is “often seen as a haven for diversity,”⁶⁴³ the art world “is being forced to confront a long record of using cultural power to demean, control and hide the contributions of gay artists.”⁶⁴⁴ He also poignantly proclaims, “Attitudes about gays and lesbians, and about same-sex marriage in particular, are now changing so fast that American culture is suffering from cognitive dissonance; still prone to habits of homophobia while simultaneously aware that overt bigotry is no longer acceptable in much of the public square.”⁶⁴⁵ Thus, while the arts correspondent noted in *The Economist* article, “Almost 50 years ago, contemporary art dispensed with modernist myths that associated originality

⁶⁴¹ Jerry Saltz, “Where Are All the Women?: On MoMA’s Identity Politics,” *New York Magazine*, November 18, 2007, <http://nymag.com/arts/art/features/40979/>.

⁶⁴² Kinshasha Holman Conwill, “African American art still needs support,” *The Art Magazine*, July 16, 2009, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/African-American-art-still-needs-support/18560>.

⁶⁴³ Philip Kennicott, “Art has yet to face up to homosexuality,” *Washington Post*, July 1, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/art-has-yet-to-face-up-to-homosexuality/2011/06/28/AGByfotH_story.html.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

with heterosexual male virility,”⁶⁴⁶ the reception of Frankenthaler,⁶⁴⁷ Lewis, Thomas, and Tobey, indicates that this presumably outdated concern has remained prominent throughout the course of their reception. While outliers will always exist, with limited numbers of female, African American, and homosexual artists selling well on the auction block or being displayed in museums, this dissertation has underscored the importance of carefully analyzing the nuances of reception, as a means of interrogating the established discourse to determine the root causes of current interpretations.

Examination of these artists through the lens of reception theory has shown that their participation in the art world challenged different social, cultural, and artistic conventions, thereby illuminating the fact that context—both specific viewing context and socio-cultural context—controls and determines the meaning of an

⁶⁴⁶ S.T., “Post-war artists at auction: The price of being female.”

⁶⁴⁷ Another contributing factor in Frankenthaler’s delayed positive reception involved the art world’s response to first generation Abstract Expressionists. One of the leading figures of the Abstract Expressionist movement, Robert Motherwell, the man whom Helen Frankenthaler would later marry, asserted that artists asked themselves “what voyages we had been embarked on for the past ten years, one that had become known as Abstract Expressionism, an adventure that was, as Alfred H. Barr, Jr., told me several times, the movement most hated and feared by other artists and by the art public in American art history, even though its works were beginning to be respected and becoming influential among artists abroad.” William C. Seitz, Dore Ashton, and Robert Motherwell, *Abstract Expressionist Painting in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), xi. Motherwell alluded to the lag time between Abstract Expressionist output and its critical and market approval and acceptance. On the one hand, in the early 1950s, Abstract Expressionism was a respected, leading movement in the arts community. As Motherwell points out, however, the movement was established in the previous decade. Broad critical approval ensued years after the movement’s inception, followed by market popularity in the mid to latter 1950s. In fact, Abstract Expressionism had such a dominant presence in the arts community that the movement defined the early 1950s. Carl Belz notes, “developments in the fine arts in the 1950’s have suffered the same forties-sixties comparisons that apply to American culture generally. Bracketed by the initial triumphs of Abstract Expressionism and the headlines generated by Pop, Op, Minimal, and Conceptual Art, the fifties seem secondary, a time dominated by the followers of Pollock, de Kooning, and Rothko, or a breeding ground for the early works of Johns, Noland, Stella, and others who critics lionized during the sixties. Carl Belz, *Frankenthaler: the 1950s*, exh. cat. (Waltham, Massachusetts: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1981), 8. Belz accurately describes the 1950s, the period in which Frankenthaler entered the art scene, as an artistic decade that was eclipsed by the sensation of the surrounding arts movements formed in the preceding and proceeding periods.

object. Mid-century viewers thus instilled contemporary notions of race and gender into reception of the inherent qualities of these nonfigurative objects. Subsequent critics and scholars constructed meaning based on past critiques, the conditions of their engagement with the objects, and current approaches to identity. The art world's explicit disavowal of the artists' statements about their work and intent, in which scholars and critics often clearly rejected or moderated associations between these artists and prominent white, male, mid-century artists, demonstrates a consistent and concerted effort to superimpose a raced and gendered reading onto their art. This dissertation has established that this tendency was perpetuated throughout the mid to latter decades of the twentieth century.

Appendix 1: Auction Market Values

Helen Frankenthaler

Paint Date	Sale Date	Sale Price	Title	Material	Auction House
1978	2011		Untitled	acrylic/paper	Swann Galleries Samuel T.
1967	2011	5500	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Freeman & Co.
1969	2011	254000	Summer Insignia	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	2011	47500	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1977	2011	68500	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	2011		Yearning	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	2011	57500	Untitled	oil/canvas on board	Sotheby's New York
	2010	104500	Travelogue I	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	2010	338500	White Beside	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1957	2010	43320	The Highway	oil/paper mixed	Heritage Auction Galleries
1986	2010	77680	Sante Fe II	media/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1952	2010		Shoreline	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	2010	146500	Distillation	acrylic and ink/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1984	2010	346550	Quattrocento	acrylic/canvas	Heritage Auction Galleries
1991	2010	374500	Aspens	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York

1979	2010	290500	Six O'clock Light	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1963	2010	266500	Only Orange	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1980	2010	206500	Cote D'Argent	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	2010	422500	Woman's Decision	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2010	18750	Untitled (painting for cover of book)	oil on linen	Phillips, de Pury & Company Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1977	2010	254500	Dawn Stroke	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	2010	43750	Thanksgiving Day	stoneware	Sotheby's New York
1961	2009	80500	Untitled	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York
1963	2009	482500	Tuscany	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	2009	578500	Springscape	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1952	2009		Shoreline	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1981	2009	314500	Azure	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1965	2009	22500	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1971	2009	21250	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1972	2009	74500	Untitled	welded steel with found metal and bolts	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1989	2008	4800	Menu from Hans Namuth's Dinner Party	watercolor and gouache/paper	Swann Galleries
1972	2008	230500	Pendulum	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New

						York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2008		July Understated	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1988	2008	230500	Black-Eyed Susan	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	2008	662500	Saturn Revisited	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1958	2008	458500	Soul of the Albino	oil/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1976	2008	278500	Cortez Junction	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1977	2008		Where Necessary	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1989	2008		Bullseye Study for Orange	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1970	2008	33350	Downpour	acrylic/paper mixed		Stair Galleries
1983	2008	58000	Untitled, 1983	media/paper		William Doyle Galleries
1974	2008	425000	Return and Exit, 1974	acrylic/canvas		Ivey-Selkirk Sotheby's New York
1974	2008	769000	Nadir Rising	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1974	2008	73000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1973	2008	265000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	2008	97000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1974	2007	601000	Cloud Harbor	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1966	2007	139000	Lifting	oil/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1979	2007	229000	Lunar Edge	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
1959	2007	525970	Labor Day, 1959	oil/canvas		Cornette De Saint Cyr
	2007	37000	April IX	oil/paper		Sotheby's New York

	2007	28000	April VIII	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York
1968	2007	622400	Glow II	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1969	2007	144000	Virgo	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2007	264000	Sky Banner	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1962	2007	276000	Arcadia	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1963	2007	276000	Dawn Shapes	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1976	2007	450000	Isis	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1982	2007	20060	Untitled Blue Atmosphere	gouache/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1963	2006	180000	III	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1987	2006	441600	Haiku	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1979	2006	475200	Another Sea	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	2006	340800	Earliness	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1979	2006	385000	Basin	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1965	2006	18000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	2006	33600	Untitled The Sound of	gouache/paper	Leslie Hindman Auctioneers
	2006	411200	the Bassoon	oil/canvas	Leslie Hindman Auctioneers
1975	2006	72000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	2005	66000	Untitled	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1987	2005	168000	Aqueduct Hofburg	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1956	2005	688000	Palace	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York

1963	2005	307200	New Brunswick	mixed media/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2005	66000	Untitled	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1989	2005	9500	Tahiti	pencil/paper	Samuel T. Freeman & Co.
1982	2005	180000	Guardian Angel	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	2005	419200	Off White Square	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1981	2005	216000	Parrot Jungle Inner	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1985	2005	180000	Sanctum	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1968	2005	10200	Untitled I	acrylic/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1968	2005	8500	Untitled I	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1978	2004	130700	White Totem	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1979	2005	65730	Green and Beyond	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1961	2004	13200	Untitled	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1961	2004	11000	Untitled	oil	Sotheby's New York
1965	2004	197900	Sea Strip	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2004	7800	Untitled 8	acrylic/paperboard	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1967	2004	6500	Untitled 8	acrylic/card	Sotheby's New York
1985	2004	142400	Big Dipper	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	2004		Untitled: Abstract Summer	acrylic/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco
1964	2003	72000	Frame	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1975	2003	11400	Holiday	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York

1969	2003	72000	Lozenge Courtyard of El Greco's	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1959	2003	231500	House	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	2003	153100	Giant Step	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1955	2003	511500	Mountain Storm	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1977	2003	73600	Thicket	acrylic	Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1966	2003	164300	Point Lookout	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2003	153100	Herald Emerson	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2003	8050	Series III	acrylic/paper	Frank H Boos Gallery
	2003	9000	Untitled	oil/canvas	William Doyle Galleries
1967	2003	3750	Untitled	gouache/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1970	2002	4200	Untitled	acrylic/linen	Swann Galleries
1967	2002	163500	Devil's Mist	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1981	2002		Landmark	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	2002	35250	Holidays # 3	acrylic/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco
1961	2002	13150	Untitled	oil/masonite	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1986	2002	42500	Harbinger	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1979	2002		Phoebe	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1986	2002	50790	Harbinger	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1967	2001	4450	Untitled	gouache/paper on board	Auktion Burkard

1982	2001	52500	Coast	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1970	2001	4200	Untitled	acrylic/linen	Swann Galleries
1976	2001	56400	The First of the Year	acrylic/canvas	Christie's Los Angeles
1964	2001	176500	Dusk	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	2001	76380	Crete	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2001	121250	Summer View Orange downpour, from Four	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1970	2000	3500	Pochoirs	acrylic	Christie's Los Angeles
	2000	70500	Skybanner	acrylic/canvas	Christie's Los Angeles
1983	2000	88130	Winter Blue	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1974	2000		Ice Flow	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1974	2000	45000	Barbuda	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1961	2000	14100	Burnt Orange Roof	oil/masonite	Christie's New York "East"
1991	2000	4630	Untitled	oil	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1975	2000		Holiday	acrylic/canvas	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1981	2000	81250	Dance	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1964	2000	35250	Cloister	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	2000	43880	Yearning	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1962	2000	132500	Arcadia	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1972	1999	34000	Mustard cloud Celebration	acrylic	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1962	1999	9775	bouquet	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York "East"
1973	1999	12080	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York

1987	1999	99300	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	York "East" Sotheby's New York
1977	1999	46000	Tantric Toward Sanguine	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1971	1999	13800	Mood # 4	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
1963	1998		Center Break	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	1998	40250	Orange Lozenge	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1989	1998		Archangel	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1980	1998	74000	Arbor	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1986	1998	79500	Mozart's Birthday	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1970	1998	4313	Untitled, 1970	acrylic/canvas	Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco
1989	1998	134500	Galileo	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1970	1998	51750	Ramparts	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1989	1998		Exit East Further Than	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1979	1998	57500	Green	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	1998		Missing Person's Report	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1967	1997	48880	Summer Window	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1960	1997	8050	Untitled Chatham	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York
1969	1997		Light	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1977	1997	68500	Camomile	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1978	1997	40250	Hug	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York

1976	1997	28750	Second Wind	acrylic/canvas	York Sotheby's New York
1981	1997		Travelogue I	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1976	1997	43700	Crossing the Border	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	1997	9200	August- September	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York "East" Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	1997	34500	Cats Green High	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1970	1997	46000	Frequency	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1977	1997	37380	Lilac Frost	acrylic/canvas	York
1974	1997		Return and Exit	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	1996	28750	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1980	1996		Labor Day	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1969	1996		Source	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1984	1996	46000	Haze	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1969	1996		Lozenge	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1996	9500	Orange downpour	acrylic	Hart Gallery
1969	1996	104250	Right Angle Blue	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1962	1996	112500	Approach	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1981	1996	27600	Travelogue II	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1996	7500	Emerson Series III	acrylic	Frank H Boos Gallery
1973	1996		Crete	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New

					York, Rockefeller Center
1988	1995		Ashes and Embers	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1977	1995		Lilac Frost	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1985	1995	57500	Wellspring	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1963	1995	6900	April VIII	oil/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	1995	6325	April IX	oil/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1983	1995	49450	Winter Blue	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1976	1995	32200	Burgundy	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	1995		Untitled Abstract	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1984	1995	9200	Composition	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1986	1995	46000	Taos This Morning's	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1982	1995	103700	Weather	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1965	1995	79500	Strike	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1968	1995	46000	Glow Ochre Square	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1967	1995	51750	# 2	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1995		January Christman	acrylic/canvas	William Doyle Galleries
1978	1994	6325	Suite	oil/canvasboard	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	1994	21850	Untitled (July 75)	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1978	1994	68500	Mistral	acrylic/canvas	York, Rockefeller

					Center
1962	1994		Aracdia	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1994	31050	Untitled	oil/paper	Sotheby's New York
1973	1994		Pillow	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1978	1994	57500	Persephone	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1962	1994		Celebrate H M	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1976	1994	8269	Untitled	acrylic	Christie's London, King Street
	1994	189500	Blue Caterpillar	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1994		Right Angle Blue	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1976	1994		Second Wind	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1997	1994	46000	Sea Green Gliding	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1961	1993	48880	Figure	oil/canvasboard	Sotheby's New York
1968	1993		Blue North White	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1985	1993		Arabesques	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1973	1993		Green Pass	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1968	1993		Summer Core	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1993	57500	Myth	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1993	244500	Swan Lake II	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1993	79500	Living Edge	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1974	1993	35000	April Mood	acrylic	Grogan &

					Company
1973	1993	63000	Copper Afternoon II	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1978	1993		White Totem	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1986	1993	63000	Mozart's Birthday	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	1993	200500	Yellow Clearing	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1963	1993		Sun Shapes	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1965	1992	7150	Emerson Series III	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1982	1992		Untitled	mixed	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1965	1992		Yellow Canyon	media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1979	1992	79750	February's Turn	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1964	1992	46200	Dusk	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1984	1992	22000	Covent Garden Study	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	1992	8250	April I	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1960	1992	1650	Untitled	oil/paper mixed	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1960	1992	1500	Untitled	media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1985	1992	9900	Untitled	ink/paper mixed	Sotheby's New York
1960	1992	17600	Untitled	media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	1992	159500	Untitled	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1991	11000	Yellow Crater London	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1991	46750	Memos # 2 Ore	acrylic/paper acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York

				York
				Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1991	93500	Golden Day	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990		Arcadia	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Brown Bird	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Sky Farm	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990	66000	Years Later	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990	41250	Earth Watch	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Acres	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Sun Shapes	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990	71500	Kashmir	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990	52800	Brooding Light	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Burnt Orange Roof	oil/panel	Sotheby's New York
1990		Third Floor 94th Street	gouache/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1990	82500	Aladdin	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990	14300	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990		Earth Watch	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990	88000	Vanilla Yellow	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1990	715000	Caterpillar	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990	88000	Plume	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990	82500	Aqueduct	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1990		Cloud Slant	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New

					York, Rockefeller Center
	1990		Untitled	acrylic/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1990	30250	Untitled	oil/canvasboard	Sotheby's New York
	1990	13200	Montauk VI	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1981	1990	19000	Untitled	acrylic/card	Sotheby's New York
	1989	9350	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1989	88000	Eight in a Square	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1989	159500	Cloud Edge	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1989	165000	Figure in a Landscape	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1989	41800	Untitled	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	649000	Orange Shapes in Frame	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	110000	Tone Shapes	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	77000	Sphinx	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	60500	August Deep	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
	1989	13200	Untitled	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	132000	Logging	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1989	200000	Cravat	acrylic/card	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	104500	Ginger Box	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	71500	Higher Threshold	acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York

		1989	19810	Untitled	acrylic/paper	Sotheby's New York Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963		1989	65000	March	acrylic/card	Sotheby's New York
		1988	90000	Passage	acrylic/card	Sotheby's New York
		1988	75000	One o'clock	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1969		1988	90000	Reunion	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1977		1988	12000	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
		1988	17000	New Year's Series IV	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1979		1988	37000	Green and beyond	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
		1988	170000	China	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
		1988	19000	Face of the landscape	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
		1988	40000	Virgo	acrylic/card	Sotheby's New York
		1987	65000	Lunar table	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
				Toward sanguine mood		
1971		1987	9500	mood	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
		1987	80000	China II	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
						Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1978		1987	38000	August deep	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
				Black shapes in off-square		
1961		1987	35000		acrylic/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1974		1987	8500	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
				Brooding		
1974		1987	45000	Light	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1970		1987	7500	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
				Untitled, Merry		
1975		1987	7500	Christman	acrylic	Sotheby's New York

1970	1987	3025	Untitled, 1970	acrylic	Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco
1978	1986	20000	White Rose of Sharon	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1958	1986	12000	Number I - Madrid Series	oil	Sotheby's New York
1962	1986	6000	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1973	1986	72500	Summer Harp	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
	1986	8500	Untitled	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	1986	50000	Earth Strata	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1986	42000	Tiger's milk	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1978	1986	34000	Jockey	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1975	1986	47500	Enigma	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1975	1985	8500	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1973	1985	71500	Boulevard	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1961	1985	12000	Untitled	oil	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1977	1985	28000	Camomile	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1980	1984	20000	Maverick	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1984	40000	Medina	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1968	1984	55000	Horoscope for K B	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1984	40000	Green pass	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center

	1984	45000	Enigma	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
	1984	11000	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
	1984	60000	Float	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
	1984	65000	4-Color space	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1979	1984	25000	Glacial blue	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1972	1984	8000	New China	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1980	1983	7000	Shippan Christmas	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1983	48000	Carnival overture	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1983	60000	Arriving in Africa	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1974	1983	25000	The elusive one	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1979	1983	7000	New Year's Series III	acrylic	William Doyle Galleries
1964	1982	80000	Red support	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1977	1982	5000	Untitled	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1963	1982	33000	March	acrylic	Sotheby's New York
1972	1982	38000	Lower threshold	acrylic	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1973	1982	38000	Green pass	acrylic	Sotheby's New York

See "Auction Records for Helen Frankenthaler," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORDS&artist=30037.

Norman Lewis

Paint Date	Sale Date	Sale Price	Title	Material	Auction House
1948	2011	15000	"Winter Games"	oil/masonite	Treadway/Toomey
1964	2011		"Abstract Composition"	mixed media/paper	Treadway/Toomey
1960	2011	2032	Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2011	2868	Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1947	2011		For Victor Dark Horizon	collage/board	Sloans and Kenyon
1955	2011	50000	(seascape) Untitled (Policeman Beating an African-American Man)	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1943	2011	33600	Crossing	watercolor and gouache/paper	Swann Galleries
1948	2011	43200	Under Sea	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1953	2011		Untitled (Abstract Composition)	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1961	2011	16800	Block Island	oil/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1975	2010		Untitled	oil/canvas	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010	3585	Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010	3585	Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010	3585	Untitled	pastel and oil/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010		Untitled	oil/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
	2010	1195	Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010		Untitled	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
1960	2010	24000	Many Faces of Legend II	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries

1976	2010	8400	Untitled	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1949	2010	43750	Untitled	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1960	2010	4375	Untitled	pigment/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1945	2010	12000	Conversation (Two Abstract Heads)	pen and ink with pastel	Swann Galleries
1946	2010	48000	Bassist	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1949	2010	21600	Untitled (Abstract Cityscape)	pen and ink with brush/paper	Swann Galleries
1949	2010	18000	City Night	oil/panel	Swann Galleries
1958	2010	10760	Untitled (Monkeys)	pastel/paper	Heritage Auction Galleries
	2010	403	Untitled	pencil/paper	Aspire Auctions, Cleveland
1953	2010	1750	Untitled, 1953	oil/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1954	2010	43750	Untitled #1	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1946	2010	25000	Untitled (Doors Red)	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York
1940	2010		Untitled (Man Reading)	pen and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1952	2010		Untitled (Abstract Composition in Purple)	watercolor and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1961	2010		Untitled	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1961	2010		Untitled	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1960	2010	55200	Midnight Carnival	watercolor and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1975	2010	4320	Untitled (Abstract Composition)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1952	2009	78000	Sinister Doings by Gaslight	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1953	2009	4800	Seaside	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1959	2009	15600	Untitled (Dancing Figures)	oil, pen and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1961	2009	5280	Untitled (Abstract)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries

			Composition)		
1964	2009	9600	Untitled (Blue Waves)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2009	3250	Untitled	ink, wash and crayon/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2009		Untitled	ink, wash and crayon/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	2009		Untitled, 1959 Construction Workers/Rural Landscape --	oil/paper	Leslie Hindman Auctioneers
1943	2009		doublesided	watercolor/paper	Swann Galleries
1937	2009		Two Barns	watercolor/paper	Swann Galleries
1949	2009	28800	Fireflower	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1961	2009	10800	Untitled (Three Figures)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
	2009		Abstraction	pastel/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1963	2008	4375	Untitled, 1963 Abstraction,	ink/board mixed	William Doyle Galleries
1960	2008	2500	1960	media/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1960	2008		Sunset #2	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1964	2008	312000	Untitled	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
			Untitled (Abstract Composition)	oil and dry brush/paper	Swann Galleries
1956	2008	86500	Pine Top #1	oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	2008		The Aftermath	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1963	2008		Untitled	ink/plaster	William Doyle Galleries
1960	2008		Abstraction, 1960	mixed media/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1963	2008		Figures Entwined, 1963	oil/paper	New Orleans Auction Galleries Inc
1960	2008		Untitled (black and Blue Composition)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1960	2008		Untitled (Nude)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries

			Untitled (Yellow and Green Composition)	pastel/paper	Swann Galleries
1960	2008		Untitled (Composition with Figures)	colored pencils and crayons/paper	Swann Galleries
1961	2008	18000	Untitled (Blue Seascape)	oil/paper	Swann Galleries New Orleans Auction Galleries Inc
1978	2008	26000			
	2008	4320	Little People	ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1950	2007	56000	Street Music	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1954	2007	40000	Untitled	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
			Many Faces of Legend #1	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1960	2007		Untitled	crayon/paper	Swann Galleries
1963	2007		Untitled	ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1964	2007				William Doyle Galleries
1950	2006	20400	Untitled Still life with Daisies in a Glass Jar	oil/board	William Doyle Galleries
	2005	10800		oil/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	2005	22800	Midnight Minstrels	mixed media/paper	Swann Galleries
	2005		Abstract Vertical Form	mixed media/paper	Swann Galleries
	2005	22000	Untitled (Abstract Form)	oil/linen	Swann Galleries Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	2005	12000	Countless Upward Rolling	oil/paper	Swann Galleries
1937	2001	2900	Landscape	watercolor/paper	Treadway/Toomey

See "Auction Records for Norman Lewis," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORD_S&artist=101558.

Alma Thomas

Paint Date	Sale Date	Sale Price	Title	Material	Auction House
1976	2011	11250	Untitled	acrylic/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1960	2011	10800	Untitled (Abstract Composition)	watercolor and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1964	2011	36000	Untitled (Abstraction in Blue) (oil/canvas)	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1974	2011	4,750	From the Sky	watercolor/paper	J Levine Auction & Appraisal LLC
1971	2011	17000	Untitled	acrylic/paper	J Levine Auction & Appraisal LLC
1975	2010		Untitled (Circular Composition)	gouache with pencil/paper	Swann Galleries
1971	2010		Untitled (Abstract Composition)	acrylic/paper	Swann Galleries
1970	2009	8400	Untitled (Concentric Circles)	acrylic over pencil/paper	Swann Galleries
1969	2009		Milky Way	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1975	2009		Untitled (Rectangular Composition) and Untitled (Circular Composition)		Swann Galleries
	2008	4000	Untitled Abstraction in White, Blue, Yellow and Red	acrylic and watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2008		Untitled	watercolor and ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2008		Garden	acrylic/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center

1978	2008	8125	Untitled (Red)	acrylic, ink and graphite/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2008	43000	Untitled	acrylic/paper	Samuel T. Freeman & Co.
1971	2008	157000	Springtime in Washington	acrylic/canvas	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2008	48000	Saturn	oil/canvas	Bonhams New York
1957	2008		Untitled	oil/canvas	Swann Galleries
1960	2008	12000	Untitled (Abstract Composition)	watercolor and ink/paper	Swann Galleries
1971	2008	16000	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Swann Galleries
	2007	14000	Abstraction in Blue, Green, Yellow and Orange	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2007	28000	Untitled Abstraction in Blue and Brown	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2007	50000	Rainbow	acrylic/canvasboard	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1972	2007	49000	Milky Way Dark Orange	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1972	2007	16000	Azaleas	acrylic/paper	Swann Galleries
	2006	6000	Untitled in Blue and Orange	acrylic/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1972	2006	50530	Red Display of Fall Leaves	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1967	2005	15280	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2005	13000	Untitled	acrylic/vellum	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1972	2005	32000	Stars and their Display	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2005	9775	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers &

						Appraisers
			Red Violet Nursery From			Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2005	144000	Above	acrylic/canvas		
	2004	1700	Untitled	tempera/paper		Swann Galleries Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	2004	9000	Untitled	mixed media/paper watercolor and gouache/paper		Sotheby's New York
1960	2004	7500	Untitled			Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	2004	3900	Untitled	mixed media/paper watercolor and gouache/paper		Sotheby's New York
1960	2004	3250	Untitled			Sotheby's New York
	2004	6600	Untitled	mixed media/paper		Sotheby's New York
	2004	9600	Untitled	mixed media/paper		Sotheby's New York Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1967	2003	11500	Untitled	mixed media/paper		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1971	2003	7475	Untitled Sparkling Leaves Among Pink	watercolor/paper		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1973	2003	47150	Roses	acrylic/canvas		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2003	69000	Splashdown of Apollo	acrylic/canvas		Swann Galleries Sotheby's New York
	2003	33000	Untitled	acrylic/canvas		Sotheby's New York
	2003	21600	Untitled	acrylic/canvas		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1968	2003	28680	Azaleas in Spring Garden of Blue Flowers	oil/canvas		
1976	2003	113530	Rhapsody	acrylic/canvas		Phillips, de Pury & Company Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1974	2002	9200	Untitled	watercolor/canvas		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2001	23000	Dahlias in the Fall	acrylic/canvas		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1970	2001	37750	Spring Displays a Rock Garden	acrylic/canvas		Weschler's Auctioneers &

					Appraisers
					Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1973	2001	43050	Fiery Sunset	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1966	2001	4255	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
1976	2000	30650	Sunset Duet	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1973	1998	18400	Morning in the Bowl of Night	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	1997	1150	Blue Abstraction	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	1997	575	Dashes	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1976	1997	63500	Babbling Brook and Whistling	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1968	1996	17000	Burst of beauty	acrylic	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	1991	1430	Flash of Spring	acrylic/canvasboard	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	1990	1772	Gift of Spring	acrylic/canvas	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers

See "Auction Records for Alma Thomas," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORDS&artist=30109.

Mark Tobey

Paint Date	Sale Date	Sale Price	Title	Material	Auction House
1957	2011	97180	Beach Fragment	tempera/paper	Sotheby's London
			Untitled		
			(Abstract		
1965	2011		Composition)	gouache/paper	Los Angeles Modern Auctions
1965	2011		White and Rose	mixed media/board	Christie's, London
					Hauswedell & Nolte
1956	2011	22600	Composition	ink/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1957	2011		Sumi	ink/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1966	2011		Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1970	2011		Composition	pencil and chalk/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
				tempera over monotype with	
1966	2011		Untitled	tempera/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
				tempera over monotype with	
1968	2011		Untitled	tempera/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
				tempera over monotype with	
1969	2011		Untitled	tempera/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1957	2011		Untitled	ink/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1961	2011	22600	Hoarfrost	gouache/board	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1974	2011	5649	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1961	2011	2824	Untitled (Head)	watercolor/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
			Untitled		
			(Portrait of a		
1964	2011		young woman)	mixed media/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
			Untitled (Head	watercolor over	
1965	2011		with red lips)	monotype/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
					Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1967	2011	2824	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
			Untitled (female		
			figure)	bronze	
1928	2011		Head	glass	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1974	2011				Christie's Paris

1960	2011	12710	Composizione	watercolor and tempera/paper	Sotheby's Milan
1958	2011		Homme vu de dos	watercolor and pencil and ball point pen/paper	Millon & Associates
1964	2011	2965	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Pierre Berge
	2011		Untitled, 1970	watercolor/paper	Rago Arts and Auction Center
	2011		Untitled, 1961	watercolor/paper	Rago Arts and Auction Center
	2011	9300	Untitled, 1953	chalk and tempera/paperboard	Rago Arts and Auction Center
1933	2011		Still Life, 1933-1934	oil and tempera/canvas	Phillips, de Pury & Company
	2011	3135	"Entombment"	tempera/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
	2011	1140	Untitled Monk	ink wash/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
	2011	4000	Untitled Cubist Portrait (Double Sided)	waxed pastel/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
1956	2011	9904	Landscape	gouache and charcoal/paper	Tajan, Paris
1961	2011		Untitled	gouache/cardboard	Bonhams New York
1969	2011	85400	Caprice	gouache/paper	Bonhams New York
1964	2011		Head	gouache/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1969	2011	5762	Sans titre, 1969	tempera and monotype/paper	Piasa
1966	2011	7993	Komposition	oil on paper on/canvas	Christie's, Zurich
1967	2011	7327	Komposition	watercolor on paper on/canvas	Christie's, Zurich
1957	2011	12500	Cat in the Clouds		Sotheby's, New York
1967	2011	4320	Untitled	gouache/paper and collage/paper	Swann Galleries
1954	2011	2738	Sans titre	gouache and pigment/paper	Etienne de Baecque
1955	2011	2859	Sans titre	watercolor and gouache/paper	Richmond-de Lamaze

1967	2011	34230	Composition	monotype and gouache on hand-made paper	Christie's London, King Street
1968	2011	24120	Untitled	watercolor and gouache/paper on board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1966	2010	5915	Senza titolo	tempera/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1962	2010	6227	Composition in Gold	gold/paper	Dorotheum, Vienna
1964	2010		Head	gouache and monotype/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1940	2010		Untitled (shell figure)	watercolor and pencil/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1940	2010		Untitled (faces and shell)	watercolor and pencil/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1940	2010		Untitled (face)	watercolor and pencil/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1940	2010	2350	Untitled (shell)	watercolor and pencil/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
	2010	2611	Untitled	tempera/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
	2010	3655	Untitled	monotype and tempera/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
			Sinnierende Frau beim Abendessen		Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG
1934	2010	12110	Untitled	oil/board	Auktionen AG
1966	2010		Untitled	watercolor/paper	Germann
	2010	15240	Senza titolo	tempera on styrofoam	Porro & C.
1966	2010	4236	Senza titolo, 1966	gouache/paper	Meeting Art
1953	2010		Untitled	chalk with tempera/paperboard	Rago Arts and Auction Center
1960	2010	7930	Composition	gouache/paper on board	Rago Arts and Auction Center
			Rückenansicht eines Samurais mit Schwert		Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern
1934	2010		Abstrakte	watercolor/paper	Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern
	2010	4664	Komposition	sepia/canvas	Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern
1964	2010	3125	Untitled (letter), 1964	mixed media/paper	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1942	2010	1300	"Pike Street Market, Figure	ink/paper	Pacific Galleries Fine Art Auction

			Study"			
1957	2010		Senza titolo	ink/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Venezia	
1961	2010		Open Space	tempera/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Venezia	
1966	2010		Palette	tempera/paper watercolor and ink/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Venezia Bukowski Stockholm	
1967	2010	4721	Untitled	ink/paper	Bukowski Stockholm	
	2010	2741	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Bukowski Stockholm	
	2010	2893	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Bukowski Stockholm	
1968	2010	11890	Composition in white, blue, and grey	tempera and glue/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich	
1941	2010	4250	"Two Market Figures"	watercolor/paper	Pacific Galleries Fine Art Auction	
1961	2010	8099	Senza titolo (for Claire)	monotype and tempera/paper gouache and monotype/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Milano Sotheby's, New York	
1966	2010	7500	Untitled	tempera with watercolor and ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1958	2010	12500	Tablet in Blue and White	watercolor and ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1955	2010	3750	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1961	2010	1750	Untitled	ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1966	2010	6928	Sans titre (2)	watercolor/paper watercolor and ink	Christie's Paris	
1966	2010	7558	Sans titre	and wash/paper watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's Paris	
1962	2010	4724	Sans titre (2)	watercolor/paper	Christie's Paris	
1961	2010	6928	Sans titre	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's Paris	
1964	2010	7243	Sans titre (2)	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's Paris	
1966	2010	4409	Sans titre	watercolor/paper watercolor and pastel/paper	Christie's Paris	
1966	2010	4094	Sans titre		Christie's Paris	

1969	2010	3464	Sans titre	gouache/paper	Christie's Paris
1968	2010	5984	Sans titre	gouache/paper	Christie's Paris
1969	2010	14170	Sans titre	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's Paris
1952	2010	9448	Sans titre	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's Paris Versailles Enchères-Royère- Lajeunesse
1956	2010	6228	Composition The Way Nature	ink/paper	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich
1965	2010	17140	Draws at Night	tempera on foam watercolor and gouache and ink/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1954	2010	10760	Ohne Titel	watercolor and crayon/paper	Swann Galleries
	2010	2400	Head	collage/paper	Swann Galleries
1967	2010		Untitled		Charlton Hall Galleries, Inc.
	2010		Clown Motif- Signature	gouache/paper	Van Ham Kunstauktionen Van Ham
1961	2010	2906	Untitled	gouache/vellum	Kunsthau Kunsthau
1964	2010	3995	Untitled	gouache/vellum	Kunsthau Kunsthau
1968	2010	10390	Ohne Titel	tempera/cardboard	Lempertz Kunsthau
1968	2010	2444	Ohne Titel	gouache/paper tempera and ink/paper	Lempertz Etienne de Baecque
1955	2010	3557	Sea-Abyss, 1955	tempera on styrofoam	Porro & C.
1970	2010		Senza titolo, 1970 circa		
1972	2010	1400	Abstract Composition, 1972	watercolor/paper scratch drawing on gilt-plated plastic foil	Ivey-Selkirk Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1962	2010		Komposition in Gold	tempera with monotype/vellum	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1969	2010	6508	Ohne Titel		Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1970	2010	4881	Ohne Titel	watercolor/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich Litchfield County Auctions
	2010	960	Dancer	tempera/paper	Millon & Associates
	2010	943	Deux personnages	watercolor/paper	
	2010	2300	Two figures in	tempera/board	Pacific Galleries

			Green		Fine Art Auction				
			Little Theatre no. 26', 1958	mixed media/paper	Bonhams Bond Street				
1958	2010	2506			Finarte				
			Senza titolo, 1968	tempera and monotype/paper	Semenzato, Venezia				
1968	2010				Finarte				
			Senza titolo (testa di donna in profilo), 1960	tempera and monotype/paper	Semenzato, Venezia				
1960	2010				Finarte				
			Senza titolo, 1961	tempera and monotype/paper	Semenzato, Venezia				
1961	2010				Christie's London, King Street				
			Red, White and Blue Town	tempera/card	Catherine Charbonneaux				
1957	2010	105110			Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates				
			Sans titre Untitled- Vertical Ink	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center				
1960	2010	2737			Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center				
			1953	2010	6270	Abstract	watercolor and ink/paper		
						Space Intervals	tempera and watercolor/paper		
						Untitled	gouache/paper		
						Untitled (figure and dog)	oil and ink/paper		
						Untitled	watercolor and gouache/paper ink and gouache/paper		
						Sans titre			
						Composition in white, blue, and grey	tempera and glue/paper		Piasa
						Composition in gold	paper/plastic tempera and		Piasa
						Cloud (Sans titre)	monotype/paper		Piasa
						Untitled	crayon, color pencil, pencil, ball-point pen and ink wash/paper		Kunsthaus Lempertz
						Phantoms of the memory	tempera and glue/paper		Karl & Faber Kunstauktionen
						Untitled	mixed media/vellum		Van Ham

1964	2009		Untitled (Four figures)	watercolor/vellum	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
	2009		Heads	mixed media/vellum	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
	2009	4233	Untitled	watercolor/vellum	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
1967	2009		Ohne Titel	watercolor and gouache/cardboard	Kunstauktionen Villa Grisebach
1962	2009		Ohne Titel	watercolor/paper	Auktionen, Berlin Villa Grisebach
1963	2009		Ohne Titel	tempera/paper	Auktionen, Berlin Villa Grisebach
	2009	3566	Ohne Titel	tempera/paper	Auktionen, Berlin Villa Grisebach
	2009	3566	Ohne Titel	tempera/paper	Auktionen, Berlin Villa Grisebach
1966	2009	4101	Ohne Titel	tempera and India ink/paper	Auktionen, Berlin Villa Grisebach
					Neumeister Kunstauktionen, Munich
1958	2009	9251	Southern Sky	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1947	2009		Skid Road Composition	gouache with pastel/paper	
1967	2009		sans titre	mixed media/paper	Kahn-Dumousset Litchfield County Auctions
1966	2009		Dancer	tempera/paper	
1966	2009	3726	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Nagel Auktionen Heritage Auction Galleries
1954	2009	11350	Untitled, 1954	tempera/paper	
			Senza titolo, 1967		
1967	2009	6120		tempera/paper	Meeting Art Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
			Untitled (Little Lady)	ink and tempera/paper	
1955	2009	2750		tempera/paper on board	Sotheby's, New York
	2009		Astarte		Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
	2009	798	Untitled - Market Sketch	ink and wash/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2009	8125	Untitled	watercolor/paper	
1971	2009	4375	Untitled	gouache and	Christie's New

				ink/paper	York, Rockefeller Center
	2009		Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2009		Untitled	watercolor and ink, pencil and glue/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2009		Untitled (Composition with Figures) (2)	gouache, graphite, watercolor and ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	2009	5625	Deux personnages	ink/paper	Millon & Associates
	2009	1037	Composition in white, blue, and grey	watercolor/paper	
1968	2009		Sans titre	tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1968	2009	12890	The Kabuki Dancers	tempera/paper	Piasa
1954	2009	13870	Composition, white and rose	oil and tempera/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1958	2009		Autografo	tempera/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1966	2009	208	Untitled	ink/paper	Finarte
1968	2009	3061	Head	watercolor on tissue paper	Semenzato, Venezia
	2009		Untitled	gouache/vellum	Van Ham
1959	2009	3618	Red	gouache/vellum	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
1966	2009		Untitled	gouache/paper	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
1964	2009	5566	Composition in Gold	watercolor and varnish/paper	Kunstauktionen
1962	2009		Cloud	mixed media/paper	Germann
	2009		Black Painting	tempera over monotype/canvas	Germann
1966	2009	1658	66	gouache/canvas	Germann
1969	2009		Senza Titolo	watercolor and tempera/paper	Sotheby's Milan
1956	2009		Senza Titolo	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's Milan
1962	2009		Senza Titolo	tempera/paper	Sotheby's Milan
1956	2009	6084	Landscape	gouache and charcoal/paper	Tajan, Paris
1972	2009	4143	Sans Titre, 1972	oil/canvas	Cornette De Saint

						Cyr Cornette De Saint Cyr Stockholm
1972	2009	4143	Sans Titre, 1972	gouache/paper		
1966	2009		Utan titel	mixed media/paper		Auctionsverk Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1955	2009		Untitled (little Lady) Small Head (Sans Titre), 1961	ink and tempera/paper		
1961	2009		1961 Sans titre, circa 1968	tempera/paper tempera on monotype pencil and tempera/paper	Piasa	
1959	2009	5333	Textures	tempera/paper watercolor and pencil heightened with white/paper	Piasa Bonhams Knightsbridge	
1960	2009	13000	Untitled		Bonhams Knightsbridge Sotheby's New York	
1954	2009	4375	Composition	tempera/board		
1959	2009		Rhythms	tempera/paper	Wright William Doyle Galleries	
	2009		Nudes in a Boudoir	chalk/paper on board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1952	2009	6000	Untitled (Darwin)	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
	2009	3000	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center	
1954	2009		Untitled (Composition with Figures)	diptych-gouache, graphite, watercolor and ink/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center Finarte Semenzato, Milano	
1962	2008		Sanza titolo	mixed media/paper	Wright	
1959	2008		Rhythms	tempera/paper		
1953	2008	66030	Sans titre	tempera/paper	Christie's Paris Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich	
1969	2008		Composition in Red, circa 1969	watercolor/paper	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich	
1966	2008		Black Painting, 1966	gouache/paper	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich Van Ham	
1939	2008	2784	Male portrait (Selfportrait?)	oil/cardboard	Kunstauktionen Van Ham	
1961	2008	3796	Dream	watercolor/vellum	Kunstauktionen	

1964	2008	4429	Meeting	lacquer over watercolor/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1964	2008		Untitled (Four figures)	watercolor/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
	2008	3417	Glue	lacquer over watercolor/vellum	Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1967	2008	7429	Rising Hills	watercolor/paper	Christie's, Milan
1966	2008		Senza titolo	watercolor/paper	Christie's, Milan
1966	2008		Senza titolo	watercolor/paper	Christie's, Milan
1962	2008		Composition in gold, 1962	gold leaf/paper	Piasa
1968	2008		Composition in white, blue, and grey, 1968	glue and tempera/paper	Piasa
1968	2008	2809	Portrait, 1951	pastel and pencil/paper	Piasa
	2008	2160	Untitled 1, 1972; Untitled 2: Two Works	watercolor and gouache/paper	Swann Galleries
1972	2008	2400	Untitled, 1972	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1967	2008	2200	Untitled, 1967	watercolor/paper	Ivey-Selkirk Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	2008	47500	Untitled	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1956	2008		Untitled	tempera/paper on board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	2008		Untitled	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1933	2008		Still Life	oil and tempera/canvas	William Doyle Galleries
1957	2008	12500	Untitled	ink/paper on board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	2008		Small Head	monotype with tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Hamburg
1961	2008		Head	monotype with tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Hamburg
1966	2008		Ohne Titel	monotype with tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Hamburg
1967	2008		Ohne Titel	monotype with tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Hamburg
1941	2008	1125	Market Scene,	ink/paper	William Doyle

			1941		Galleries
			Nudes in a Boudoir	chalk/paper	William Doyle Galleries
			Figures	ink and wash/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
			Landscape	Gouache and charcoal/paper	Tajan, Paris
			Composition	China ink and ink wash/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
			Portrait	pastels and colored pencil/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
			Composition	watercolor/paper	Versailles
			Homme vu de dos	watercolor and pencil/paper	Enchères Perrin-Royère-Lajeunesse
			Untitled (Darwin) - double sided	watercolor/paper	Millon & Associates
			Untitled	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
			Cloud (unnamed)	tempera	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
			Composition red and green (unnamed)	tempera	Piasa
			small head (unnamed)	tempera/paper	Piasa
			Clown	ink/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Komposition	watercolor and deck colors/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Komposition	watercolor and deck colors/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Komposition	deck colors/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Komposition	deck colors/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Komposition	deck colors/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
			Composition in Red	watercolor/cardboard	Ketterer Kunst, Munich

1964	2008	4911	Ohne Titel	gouache/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1967	2008		Ohne Titel	watercolor/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1969	2008	3683	Ohne Titel	gouache and ink/cardboard	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1965	2008		Ohne Titel (Forms and Change)	tempera/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1960	2008	23520	Phantoms of the memory	glue and tempera/paper	Karl & Faber Kunstauktionen
1961	2008	6270	Ohne Titel, 1961	gouache and sand/cardboard	Karl & Faber Kunstauktionen
1962	2008	23100	Sans titre	ink and gouache/paper	Sotheby's Paris Van Ham
1966	2008	20500	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Kunsthauktionen Van Ham
1969	2008		Untitled	oil and watercolor/paper	Kunsthauktionen Van Ham
1967	2008	3153	Untitled	watercolor/vellum	Kunsthauktionen Van Ham
1960	2008		Selbstporträt	ink/paper	Kunsthauktionen Van Ham
1961	2008		Self portrait	ink/paper	Kunsthauktionen Dobiaschofsky
	2008		Ohne Titel	mixed media/paper	Auktionen, Bern
1925	2008	1875	Rainy Day, circa 1925	charcoal/paper	William Doyle Galleries
	2008		Nudes in a Boudoir	chalk/paper on board	William Doyle Galleries
1958	2008	1000	Untitled, 1958	gouache and ink/paper	Ivey-Selkirk
1967	2008	1400	Untitled. 1967	watercolor/paper	Ivey-Selkirk
1959	2008		Untitled	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1950	2008	289000	Hidden Laughter	gouache and graphite/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1956	2008		Composition	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1929	2008	5700	Market Santa Claus	oil/canvas	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco

1967	2008	3600	Untitled	gouache/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1968	2008	4500	Untitled	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1968	2008	4200	Untitled	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1967	2008	2400	Untitled Atmospheric Abstraction	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1966	2008		Untitled Abstraction in Brown, Black and Red	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1965	2008		Untitled Abstraction in Orange and Red	mixed media/paper	
1945	2008		Untitled	tempera/paper	Mroczeq Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
1964	2008		Sans titre, 1964	tempera/cardboard pastel,	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1951	2008		Portrait Sans Titre (Totem Totemique)	charcoal/paper	Catherine Charbonneaux
1954	2008	3276		tempera/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
1954	2008	2730	Sans Titre (Lettering Sign)	tempera/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
1964	2008		Pastorale	tempera/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1933	2008	4025	Entombment	tempera/paper	Pacific Galleries
1953	2007	46060	White Writing, 1953	tempera/board	Fine Art Auction Versailles
1964	2007	2551	Untitled	black ink and	Enchères Perrin-Royère-Lajeunesse
1959	2007		Twirling Man Study	tempera/card pencil, black ink and wax crayon/paper	Christie's London, South Kensington
1968	2007		Untitled, circa 1968	tempera/paper	Christie's London, South Kensington
					Piasa

					Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
	2007		Portrait	mixed media/paper	
1970	2007		Ohne Title, 1970	tempera/paper	Christie's, Zurich
	2007		Ohne Titel	tempera/paper	Christie's, Zurich
			Untitled		
	2007		Abstraction in Brown, Black and Red	watercolor/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
			Untitled		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
	2007		Abstraction in Orange and Red	mixed media/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
			Untitled Multi-Colored		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1965	2007		Abstraction	mixed media/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
			Untitled		Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1967	2007		Atmospheric Abstraction	watercolor/paper	Porro & C.
1963	2007	24040	Composizione	gouache/paper	
				gouache and charcoal/paper	
1956	2007		Landscape, 1956		Tajan, Paris
					Samuel T. Freeman & Co. Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
1966	2007	9560	Untitled	oil/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
1953	2007	13440	Trio	gouache/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
			Untitled-Kneeling Man	ink/paper	Bukowski Stockholm Finarte
1964	2007	5014	Komposition	watercolor/paper	Semenzato, Venezia Sotheby's New York
			Senza titolo, 1967	tempera/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1967	2007				
1954	2007		Composition	tempera/board	Piasa
			Desert Town (Wild City)	mixed media/board	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
1950	2007	100330			
1960	2007	12120	Sans titre, 1960	mixed media/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
			Untitled, (Lettering Sign)	tempera/paper	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
1954	2007		Totem		Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F. Tajan
			Totemique	tempera/paper	

	2007	4200	Untitled	watercolor/paper	William Doyle Galleries Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1957	2007	60000	Space Ritual # 3	ink/paper	
1964	2007		Untitled Figural Composition	mixed media/paper	Stair Galleries
	2007		Untitled Abstract Composition	watercolor/paper	Stair Galleries
	2007		Untitled	mixed media/paper	Stair Galleries Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2007	14400	Dancer Nude male	mixed media/paper	Pacific Galleries
	2007	1600	figures	mixed media/paper	Fine Art Auction Sotheby's London, Olympia
1960	2007	14140	Untitled	mixed media/paper	
1961	2007		Sans titre	mixed media/paper	Tajan, Paris
	2006	14310	Sans titre	tempera/paper	Sotheby's Paris
	2006	14310	Sans titre	tempera/paper	Sotheby's Paris Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1943	2006	120000	Intervals	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1957	2006	132000	Walled Space	tempera/board	William Doyle Galleries
1969	2006	6600	Untitled	watercolor/paper mixed	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1961	2006		Untitled	media/cardboard	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1967	2006	8507	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1954	2006		Composition Echoes from the Orient	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1948	2006	27000		tempera/paper	Mroczek Brothers Auctioneers & Associates
	2006	1680	Self-Portrait in Ladder	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	2006	2400	Composition	mixed media/paper	William Doyle Galleries
1966	2006	1080	Dancer	tempera/paper	

1959	2006	15600	Travel Tobey	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1968	2006	6579	Composition	gouache	Christie's, Zurich
1957	2006	66160	Beach fragment	tempera/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1957	2006	221340	Wounded Tide	tempera/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	2006		Untitled (Blue Dripping)	tempera/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
			Mouvement		Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1961	2006	12580	somnolent	watercolor/paper	Kunsthhaus
1967	2006	3532	Untitled-composition	tempera/paper	Lempertz
1970	2006	3532	Untitled-composition	mixed media	Van Ham
1963	2006	3238	Untitled-composition	mixed media	Kunstauktionen Van Ham
1962	2006		Ohne Titel, 1962	mixed media and sand/cardboard	Kunstauktionen Neumeister
1967	2006	13250	Flowery desert	tempera/cardboard	Kunstauktionen, Munich
1966	2006	20400	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Tajan, Paris
	2006	30000	Composition	mixed media/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1956	2006		Untitled (White Writing)	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1960	2006		Untitled	mixed media/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1960	2006		Untitled	mixed media/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1967	2006	9676	Composition blue-red-yellow on brown	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
	2006	1793	Cezanne's Self Portrait	pastel/paper	Hans Widmer
1966	2006	5079	Untitled, 1966 (2)	gouache/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1961	2006	10930	Untitled-composition	mixed media	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1960	2006	11580	Untitled	oil	Stockholm Auctionsverk
1960	2006	23980	Metropolis	gouache/card	Christie's London, South Kensington

					South Kensington
1930	2006	5004	Au café	watercolor/paper	Catherine Charbonneaux
	2006		Abstracted		
	2006		Figures	mixed media/board	Treadway/Toomey
	2006	496	Two male nudes	ink/paper	Mallams - Oxford
1958	2006	29270	Texture with Blue	gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1959	2006	424070	Blue Interior	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	2006		Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	2005		Swan Lake	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1969	2005	1451	Composition	tempera	Christie's, Zurich
1963	2005	6773	Flowery desert	watercolor/paper	Christie's, Zurich
1961	2005	3676	On the moon	tempera	Christie's, Zurich
1958	2005	2128	Strange cloud	tempera	Germann
	2005		Head	watercolor/paper	Swann Galleries
1954	2005		Untitled	mixed media/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1944	2005	45000	Persephone	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1957	2005	262400	Wounded Life	mixed media/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1965	2005	3205	Composition in Red	watercolor/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
	2005	3351	Untitled	paper	Bukowski Stockholm
	2005	2768	Lights	mixed media	Bukowski Stockholm
1968	2005	13990	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
	2005	12240	Untitled	mixed media	Bukowski Stockholm
1965	2005	11360	Composition in green	watercolor/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
1961	2005	40310	Untitled	gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1966	2005	15600	Untitled (Stars)	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
	2005	3600	Abstract	tempera/panel	Susanin's

1959	2005		Travel Tobey	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1952	2005	7800	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	2005		Head	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	2005	7200	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1968	2005	3120	Etoile	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	2005	7170	Composition	mixed media/paper	Samuel T. Freeman & Co.
1963	2005	6000	Composition	gouache	Samuel T. Freeman & Co.
	2005	8747	Untitled	gouache/cardboard	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	2005	34990	Fantasy of the Past	tempera/board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1954	2005	5700	Untitled	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	2005	4750	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's New York
1967	2005	3096	Untitled	tempera	Germann
1969	2005	1935	composition	tempera	Germann
1969	2005	2128	Untitled	tempera	Germann
1964	2005	2060	Scene in Pike Place Market, Seattle	tempera	Germann
1970	2005	50400	June	watercolor/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1969	2005	9000	Untitled	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1974	2005	33000	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
1954	2005	7629	Untitled	tempera/canvas	Sotheby's New York
			Flight into Egypt	tempera/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco

1975	2005	3638	Ever seeing eye	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's London, South Kensington
1956	2005	24810	Rive gauche I	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, South Kensington
1966	2005	1766	Composition	mixed media	Pescheteau-Badin
1966	2005	1766	Composition	mixed media	Pescheteau-Badin
			Drums, Indian and Word of God		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1955	2005	48000	God	tempera/board	Rago Arts and Auction Center
	2005	16000	The Skidroad	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1966	2005	4800	Bale	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1966	2005	4000	Bale	watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
			Echo Des Indiens		Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1959	2005	24680	Indiens	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1957	2005	17500	Untitled	oil and pencil/paper	
			Little World III. Dream in a Castle		Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1960	2005	19850	Castle	tempera	Christie's London, King Street
1965	2005	7938	Untitled	tempera/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1967	2005	4630	Rising Hills	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, King Street
			Composition with Blue and Red		Sotheby's London, Olympia
1967	2005	6747	Red	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
			Composition (Brown)	ink/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1967	2005	8997	(Brown)	watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1967	2005	29240	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1966	2005	8547	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
				gouache, ink and watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1967	2005	6297	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
			Composition (Grey)		Sotheby's London, Olympia
1966	2005	11250	(Grey)	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
				gouache and pencil/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
1961	2005	9446	Untitled	watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
					Sotheby's London, Olympia
1961	2005	6946	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's London, Olympia
				watercolor and colored crayon/paper	Sotheby's London, Olympia
	2005	15740	Untitled		Sotheby's London, Olympia
1952	2005	11580	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London,

					Olympia Van Ham Kunstauktionen
1961	2004	6623	Untitled	gouache	William Doyle
	2004	1793	Street Scene, Hong Kong	ink/board	Galleries
	2004	4415	Untitled	watercolor/paper on board	Villa Grisbach Auctionen, Berlin Dorotheum, Vienna
1964	2004	5887	Woman's face	mixed media	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1966	2004	18240	Untitled	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York
1966	2004	7800	Untitled	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1968	2004	19200	Untitled	oil/paper	Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern
1964	2004	2128	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Hamburg
1970	2004	2207	Dots	tempera	Artcurial Briest Le Fur Poulain F.
1961	2004	2649	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Tajan Cornette De Saint Cyr
1969	2004	5298	Composition Untitled, self	mixed media/paper	Bonhams Bond Street
1971	2004	7277	portrait	gouache	Bonhams Bond Street
1969	2004	4961	Untitled	gouache	William Doyle Galleries
	2004	5000	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Susanin's Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2004	1300	Untitled	ink/paper	Clars Auction Gallery
1966	2004	5019	Transcendence Sheep in the	watercolor/paper	Clars Auction Gallery
1935	2004	5000	Moonlight	tempera/paper	Clars Auction Gallery
	2004		Sheep in the Moonlight	tempera/paper	Litchfield County Auctions
1950	2004	17000	Nomadia	watercolor/paper	Villa Grisbach Auctionen, Berlin
1968	2004	11780	Untitled	gouache/cardboard	Hauswedell & Nolte
1950	2004	41210	Ancient empires	gouache	Hauswedell & Nolte
1957	2004	16190	Untitled	ink/paper	Nolte

1961	2004	4710	Man's face	watercolor/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
			Abstract		Hauswedell & Nolte
1964	2004	5004	composition	oil	Hauswedell & Nolte
			Abstract		Hauswedell & Nolte
1967	2004	6181	composition	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
				tempera/paper on board	Dallas Auction Gallery
1968	2004	22500	Untitled		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2004	3360	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	2004	41830	Untitled	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
			Untitled		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2004	17930	Untitled	tempera/paper	
			Untitled		
	2004	3096	composition	mixed media/paper	Phillippe Schuler Porro & Co.
1952	2003	14720	Yellow fall	Mixed media/card	Leslie Hindman Auctioneers
1954	2003	4000	Travellers	watercolor/paper	William Doyle Galleries
	2003		Self Portrait	gouache/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1970	2003	8831	Composition	tempera	Hauswedell & Nolte
1970	2003	1177	Composition	tempera	Hauswedell & Nolte
1962	2003	3870	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Germann Cornette De Saint Cyr
1960	2003	1103	Personnages	gouache	Cornette De Saint Cyr
1960	2003	1398	Personnages	gouache	Cornette De Saint Cyr
1966	2003	2902	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Auktion Burkard
1967	2003	7353	Untitled	tempera/paper	Auktion Burkard
1970	2003	12580	Untitled	gouache/paper	Auktion Burkard Casa D'Aste
1965	2003	7006	Untitled	tempera/paper	Babuino Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	2003	53780	All Together on Earth	ink/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	2003		Intersection	tempera/velvet	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1961	2003	2820	Sign No 263, 1961	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco

1968	2003	3788	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Stockholm Auctionsverk
1957	2003	10800	Released energy	ink/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1957	2003	9000	Released energy	ink/paper	Sotheby's New York
1956	2003	21500	Anges	tempera/paper on board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1954	2003	16190	Etoile	tempera/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1968	2003	6579	Untitled till Life with	watercolor/paper	Auktion Burkard Sotheby's New York
1933	2003	9000	White Head	oil/board	Sotheby's New York
1961	2003	72000	Red, White and Blue Town, # 2	tempera/masonite	Sotheby's New York
1954	2003	19200	New York Meditative	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1954	2003	21600	Series	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	2003	1935	Untitled	ink/paper	Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern Christie's London, South Kensington
1965	2003	1653	Untitled	watercolor/card	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	2003		Untitled	mixed media/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
	2002	11040	Red trails	gouache/cardboard	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1923	2002	1400	Portrait of Paul McCool	charcoal	Casa D'Aste Babuino
1957	2002	3826	Composition Colored Earth (Beach	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	2002	47800	Fragments # 2)	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1958	2002		Untitled	gouache/paper	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1964	2002		Silver Rain	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1958	2002		On the Ritz	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	2002	2350	Forms	watercolor/paper	Center

	2001	2376	Composition abstraite	gouache	Binoche Paris Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1968	2001	1600	On glass	gouache/paper	Skinner Inc., Malborough Sotheby's New York
	2001		Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York "East"
1954	2001	26630	Parade	tempera/paperboard	Germann Christie's New York "East"
	2001	2820	Space Rose, Biarritz	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1973	2001	5321	Untitled	gouache	DuMouchelles Auction House Kunsthaus Lempertz Van Ham
	2001		Untitled	gouache/paper	Kunstauktionen Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	2001		Untitled	tempera/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich Phillips, de Pury & Company
	2001	4500	Composition	tempera	Sotheby's New York Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1964	2001	1721	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Cornette De Saint Cyr
1969	2001	5436	Untitled	tempera	Christie's Los Angeles
1966	2001		Untitled Composition in blue and redbrown	gouache/paper	Auktion Burkard
1964	2001	4077		watercolor/paper	Farsetti
1967	2001	9000	Composition Fantasy Motive	gouache/paper	Germann
1960	2001	9600	Composition	tempera/paper	
1962	2000	8800	Composition brune et rose	tempera	
	2000	1584	Composition Green and Yellow	gouache	
	2000	14100	Moments	gouache/paper	
1966	2000	4644	Untitled Serenity and	gouache	
1959	2000	6800	anxiety	tempera	
1967	2000	48380	R -R	tempera	
1966	2000	10000	Untitled	paper/paper on board	Christie's New

			Abstract composition	tempera/paper	York, Rockefeller Center Frank H Boos Gallery Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	2000				
1966	2000	11750	Untitled	oil/board	Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1963	2000	8800	Untitled	gouache	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1969	2000		Untitled	gouache/paper	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1971	2000		Untitled (Self Portrait)	gouache/paper	Phillips, de Pury & Company
1969	2000		Untitled	gouache/paper	Phillips, de Pury & Company Christie's London, South Kensington
1955	2000	23150	Hidden worlds	tempera/board	
1961	2000	4620	Composition	watercolor/paper	Francis Briest
1961	2000	2904	Composition	watercolor/paper	Francis Briest
1961	2000	3036	Composition	watercolor and ink/paper	Francis Briest Kunsthaus
1954	2000	4077	Untitled	tempera/paper	Lempertz Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1957	2000	4600	Sumy	ink/paper	
1968	2000	1320	Composition	paper/cardboard	Tajan, Paris Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1924	2000		Portrait of Adolf Bolm	pastel/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
	2000	3450	Voyage	gouache/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1963	2000	5750	Untitled, 1963	gouache/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1957	2000	13800	Space Ritual # 7	ink/board	Sotheby's New York
1958	2000		Untitled	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1965	1999	12400	Abstract composition	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, King Street Kunsthaus
1961	1999	7248	Untitled	tempera	Lempertz
	1999	2265	Gentle thoughts	tempera	Kunsthaus

					Lempertz Phillips - Baywayer Millon & Associates
1975	1999	860	Watchful eye	gouache	
	1999	1386	Theatre	watercolor and gouache/paper watercolor and pencil/paper on board	Ketterer Kunst, Berlin
1967	1999	6795	Composition	watercolor/paper	Francis Briest Christie's London, South Kensington
	1999	3036	Composition		Christie's London, South Kensington
1954	1999	826	Totem Twirling man	tempera	Christie's London, South Kensington
1954	1999	826	study	crayon/paper	Sotheby's Zurich
1962	1999	4354	Abstract Red	watercolor/paper	Auktion Burkard
1967	1999	3096	Untitled Between white and black	gouache	
1970	1999	48380			Germann Sotheby's New York
1965	1999	145500	Untitled	oil/canvas	Christie's Milan
1967	1999	2800	Untitled	oil/card	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1955	1999	5889	Composition	watercolor/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1954	1999	2300	Calligraphic	tempera/paper watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	1999	3307	Untitled	ink/paper	Christie's Zurich
1960	1999	3386	Face		Sotheby's New York
1968	1999	4600	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1957	1998	8200	USA Rithmus	mixed media	Christie's London, South Kensington
1961	1998	3307	Composition	gouache	Christie's London, South Kensington
1969	1998	3638	Composition	tempera	Christie's London, South Kensington
1953	1998	6946	Black flute	tempera/paper	Christie's London, South Kensington
1961	1998	6284	Composition	gouache	Auktion Burkard
1967	1998	4644	Untitled	gouache	Kunsthau Lempertz
1966	1998	996	Untitled	gouache	Christie's New York, Rockefeller
	1998		Underneath the Moments	mixed media/paper	

					Center
1964	1998	46000	Westward Drift	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	1998		Magic Eye	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1936	1998	123500	Flight Over Forms	tempera/masonite	Sotheby's New York
1965	1998	620	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Dumousett-Deburax
1954	1998	2400	Forms	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's New York "East"
1954	1998		Calligraphic	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1965	1998	7442	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1966	1998	2750	Untitled	watercolor/paper on board	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1955	1998	1700	Beaver	gouache	Mystic Fine Arts, Ltd.
	1998	1380	Knight with a Lady	oil/burlap	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1928	1998	805	Companions	charcoal/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1970	1998	36390	Interspersed	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1951	1998		Untitled	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1953	1998		Untitled	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1961	1998		Composition with Insects	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1966	1998	2785	Personnage au chapeau	watercolor and gouache/paper	Millon & Associates
1970	1998	1800	Composizione	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's Milan
1958	1998	24810	Market in the summer	tempera/paper on board	Christie's London, King Street
1944	1998		Drums, Indians and The Word	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1961	1998	14950	Estampage # 15	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York

1965	1998	3307	Monotype red-brown 1966	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1965	1997	1223	Untitled- Woven city/a poem	gouache/panel	Hauswedell & Nolte
1966	1997	1132	Composition	gouache	Hauswedell & Nolte
1955	1997	13590	Flight	watercolor/paper	Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1945	1997	23000	Announcement Advance with	gouache/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1968	1997	96000	the Light	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1957	1997		White Lyric	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1955	1997		Blue Canal II	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1966	1997	5245	Composition	gouache	Norden
1956	1997	20700	Celebration Fete	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1968	1997	1548	Composition	gouache	Germann
1969	1997	1354	Standing figures	watercolor/paper	Germann
1960	1997	23220	Untitled	mixed media	Germann
1970	1997	6400	Untitled	gouache	Wolf's
1960	1997	6000	Untitled	tempera/paper	Wolf's
1959	1997	8269	Message Rose	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1959	1997	9923	progression	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1960	1997	3638	Old garden	oil/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1997	906	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Nagel Auktionen
1963	1997	12580	Red Signs	gouache	Germann
1965	1997	16450	Passing Clouds	paper	Germann
1961	1997	3289	Brown bottles with red and blue	watercolor/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1958	1997	2400	Untitled	tempera/paper	Finarte
1960	1997	11910	Hunter's moon	paper/board	Semenzato, Rome
1960	1997	13590	Winter's edge	tempera	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1997		The Way Nature	tempera	Hauswedell & Nolte
			Draws		Christie's New York, Rockefeller

					Center
1956	1997	14950	Orison	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1997		Untitled	gouache/board	Sotheby's New York
1937	1997	2760	Movement		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1961	1997	6325	around a Martyr La Resille (The Net)	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1957	1997	3450	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
			Totem totemique,	ink/paper	
1954	1997	1750	Cosmic world	tempera	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1965	1996	1819	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, South Kensington
1963	1996	4077	Head	mixed media/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
			Composition in yellow, green and purple		
1965	1996	1359		gouache	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1971	1996	12680	Composition	tempera	Hauswedell & Nolte
1963	1996	1359	Untitled	ink/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1964	1996	23220	Evening light	gouache	Auktion Burkard
1959	1996	34500	White Writing Yellow and Blue	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1962	1996	11500	Composition	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1965	1996	3680	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1964	1996	2902	Untitled	gouache	Germann
1958	1996	8269	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1958	1996		Untitled		Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
			Sumi Drawing, 1957	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1957	1996	2875		ink/paper	
1964	1996	1056	Silhouettes	wash	Guy Loudmer
			Composition		Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1969	1996	7938	rose	watercolor/paper	

1961	1996	3696	Composition	watercolor/paper	Francis Briest
1961	1996	3696	Composition	gouache	Francis Briest
1955	1996	2491	Northwest landscape	watercolor and gouache/board	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1967	1996	1630	Composition	oil/board	Karl & Faber Kunstauktionen
1965	1996	2185	Composition	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1968	1996	3162	Etoile	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1996	10000	Between Worlds	plaster	Phillips, de Pury & Company
	1996	14950	Flight The Bride and	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1943	1996	28750	His Tree	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1969	1996	16100	Untitled	tempera/panel	Sotheby's New York
1954	1996		Meditative Series IX	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1945	1996	85000	Domination of the Virgin	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1967	1996	1725	Untitled	tempera/board	Christie's New York, "East"
1965	1996	3059	Monotype 4506	gouache/paper mixed	Bukowski
1968	1996	3483	Untitled	media/cardboard	Stockholm
1961	1996	3307	The Serpent of Wisdom	gouache	Germann
1965	1996	1157	Composition	watercolor/paper watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1955	1996	8269	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1958	1996	3450	Tablet in Blue and White	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1960	1995	4134	Untitled	gouache	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	1995	677	Untitled	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1995	2150	Composition	gouache/board	Sotheby's Zurich
1966	1995	33350	Tumult	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1959	1995	19550	Cosmic Tension I	gouache	Sotheby's New York
				gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center

1935	1995		Medieval Battle	gouache/board	Christie's New York, "East"
	1995		Northwest landscape	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1967	1995		Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1945	1995	2300	Untitled	tempera/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1954	1995	2875	Towards the North, 1954	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
	1995	1035	Dancer	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1966	1995	920	Untitled (Abstract Composition)	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1960	1995	6900	Untitled	pencil/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1963	1995	1380	Composition	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1945	1995	66160	Space window	gouache/board	Christie's London, King Street
1960	1995	1782	Sans titre	watercolor/paper	Jean Louis Picard
	1995	2244	Sans titre	watercolor/paper	Jean Louis Picard
1962	1995	14510	Earth script	tempera/paper on board	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1942	1995		Convalescence	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1954	1995	5209	Untitled	gouache/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1962	1995	1452	Composition	watercolor/paper	Guy Loudmer
1960	1995	6900	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1995	23000	White Spot	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1958	1995		Tablet in Blue and White	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	1995	2070	Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1954	1995		Towards the North, 1954	tempera/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco

1955	1995		Beaver	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1968	1995		Etoile	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1995	3450	Parade	ink/board	Christie's New York, "East"
1967	1994	14890	Other places, other spaces No. 2	tempera watercolor and gouache/paperboard	Christie's London, King Street Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1958	1994	10750	Untitled	watercolor and ink/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1967	1994	5788	Untitled		
1956	1994	16450	Oriental garden Nr 22	tempera	Rusterholz Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1953	1994	40250	New Crescent	mixed media/board	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1965	1994	2588	Untitled, 1965	gouache/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1965	1994	2250	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1994	5060	Torso	oil/canvas	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1955	1994		Waving Forms	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1994		Untitled		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1965	1994		Composition	mixed media/paper	Skinner Inc.,
1951	1994		Once Upon a Time	mixed media/paperboard gouache/paper on board	Marlborough Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1954	1994	12400	Untitled		Delorme & Fraysse
	1994	792	Homme assis	ink/paper	Galerie Kornfeld and Cie
1960	1994	20320	Minute world	tempera/board	Hauswedell & Nolte
1953	1994	4303	One line	tempera	Hauswedell & Nolte
	1994		Ancient Caves		Hauswedell & Nolte
1959	1994	10870	No. 1	tempera/paper	
1955	1994	1650	Homme nu	gouache	Poulain & le Fur
	1994	2838	Ecriture blanche	gouache	Poulain & le Fur
1969	1994	4077	Gray Spectres	ink/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich

	1994	1585	Labyrinth	gouache/board	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1961	1994	2640	Sans titre	gouache	Marc Arthur Kohn
	1994		Northwest Landscape	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1961	1994	1725	Patterns	mixed media/board	Christie's New York, "East"
1959	1994	2588	Untitled, 1959	mixed media/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1966	1994	2331	Monotype	watercolor/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
	1994	2795	Composition	tempera/board	De Vuyst
1958	1994	4025	On the Ritz Purple	mixed media/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1961	1994	4025	Composition Totem	gouache/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1954	1994		Totemique	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1954	1994		Totem	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1959	1994		Twirling Men	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1954	1994		Cosmic World	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1994	2415	Untitled	pastel/board	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1956	1994	9200	Oriental Garden	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1961	1993	9592	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1993	6615	Happy blue Wafting	gouache/paper on board	Christie's London, King Street
1970	1993	10250	memories	tempera	Christie's London, South Kensington
1954	1993	2300	Labyrinth	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1966	1993	10350	Untitled Enchanted	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
1950	1993	54630	Garden Forms in	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1973	1993	2265	progress Abstract	watercolor/paper	Nagel Auktionen
	1993	4313	Composition	mixed media/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San

						Francisco
				watercolor and gouache/paper on board		Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1965	1993	19850	Circular	tempera/paper on board		Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1960	1993	5209	Baroque			Galerie Bassenge, Berlin
1957	1993	1812	Figure	ink/paper		
	1993	1064	Male nude Sketch for a Mural	paper		Auktion Burkard Sotheby's New York
1956	1993		Portrait of Adolph Blum	tempera/board		Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1924	1993		Three Men in an Interior	pastel/paper		Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1941	1993	402	Dancers	mixed media/paper		Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1943	1993		Beaver A Symbolist	tempera/board		Skinner Inc., Marlborough
1955	1993	1100	Pictograph	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1993	920	Strange Cloud	ink/paper		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1958	1993	1840	Strange cloud	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
	1993	1600	Totem	tempera		Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1954	1993		Totem	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York
1954	1993		Totemique	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York
1954	1993		Cosmic World	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York
1954	1993	8250	Untitled	mixed media/paper		Christie's New York, "East"
1959	1992		White Writing	mixed media/board		Sotheby's New York
1966	1992	8800	Untitled	mixed media/paper		Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1951	1992	23100	White Writing	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York
1958	1992		Strange Cloud	tempera/paper		Sotheby's New York
1957	1992	4400	Radiations	tempera/board		Sotheby's New York

					York
1957	1992	4000	Radiations	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1953	1992	3850	Totem # 2	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1953	1992	3500	Totem No. 2	tempera	Sotheby's New York
1946	1992		White Lights	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1992	8800	Modern Saint	tempera/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1957	1992	4400	Space Ritual # 10, 1957	ink/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1964	1992	1188	Composition en bleu, rouge et noir	gouache	Catherine Charbonneaux Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1963	1992	2420	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1954	1992	22000	World Dust	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	1992	9900	Apparitions	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1952	1992	16500	Pavanne	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1958	1992	60500	In the Grass No II	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1964	1992		Untitled	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1969	1992	16540	Untitled	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	1992	594	Sans titre	ink/paper	Lombrail Teucquam
1967	1991	4000	Paesaggio	oil	Sotheby's Milan
1957	1991	13200	Chinese Grocery	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York
1959	1991	20900	Threaded Plane	tempera/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	1991	5500	Baroque	tempera/paper	Christie's New

					York, Rockefeller Center
					Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1967	1991	33000	Other places, other spaces # 2	tempera/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1991	7607	Ballet	tempera/board	Christie's London, King Street
1953	1991	12400	White Writing	tempera/board	Christie's London, King Street
	1991	38700	Sumi	ink/paper	Finarte - Chiasso
1962	1991	61930	Venise B	tempera/paper	Finarte - Chiasso
	1991		Untitled	gouache/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
					Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1954	1991	2700	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
			Composition in red, blue and yellow	watercolor and gouache/paper	Weschler's Auctioneers & Appraisers
1967	1991	1200		gouache/paper on board	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1962	1991	4212	Female Dancer		Schneider Auktionen
1968	1991	3193	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Schneider Auktionen
1962	1991	3386	Untitled	watercolor/paper	
	1991	3960	Personnage et son aura mauve	gouache	Claude Robert
	1991	3696	Theatre	watercolor and gouache/paper	Claude Robert
	1991	3564	Personnage au chapeau	watercolor and gouache/paper	Claude Robert
1966	1991	2977	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	1991	1653	Composition with insects	pencil/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	1991	1650	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, "East"
1955	1991	6600	Waving Forms	crayon/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1955	1991	6000	Waving Forms	crayon/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1991	5100	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Barridoff Galleries
1955	1990	2508	Space channeled	ink/paper	Guy Loudmer
				watercolor and gouache/paper on board	Schneider Auktionen
1967	1990	12580	Composition		

1967	1990	9118	Untitled	tempera/cardboard mixed media/paper	Sotheby's Amsterdam
1961	1990	4559	Sumi III	on board	Sotheby's Amsterdam
1968	1990	1451	Composition rouge et blanche	gouache/board	Galerie Pierre- Yves Gabus
1968	1990	7260	Composition noire arrachee	ink/paper	French Auction House
1960	1990	1254	Composition	gouache/board tempera/paper on board	Martin & Chausselet Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1958	1990	4303	Multiple flight	board	
1960	1990	2640	Composition	watercolor/paper	Ferri
	1990		Unknown Worlds Portrait presume de Veira de Silva	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1960	1990	1056		gouache	Martin & Chausselet Boisgirard & Associés
1960	1990	1320	Personnages	gouache	
1961	1990	2515	Mann im Raum	gouache	Germann Sotheby's New York
	1990	66000	Central	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1990		Waving Forms	crayon/paper	
1960	1990	3696	Composition	watercolor/paper	Ferri Phillips, de Pury & Company Eberhart Auktionen
1954	1990	6615	Composition	tempera/board	Auktion Burkard
	1990	9192	Monotype	watercolor/paper	
	1990	9482	Untitled	tempera	Auktion Burkard
1967	1990	8611	Untitled	tempera	Auktion Burkard Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1966	1990	4961	Untitled	gouache watercolor and gouache/paper	Dumousett- Deburaux Dumousett- Deburaux
1960	1990	5544	Composition		
1965	1990	3564	Autoportrait	ink/paper watercolor and gouache/paper	Habsburg - New York
1967	1990	21000	Composition		Sotheby's New York
	1990	68750	White Form	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1990	42900	Winter Carnival in Basel	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York

			Untitled (Space Window)	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1990	55000	Fantasy yellow and blue	gouache	Germann
1964	1990	6289	Composition Abstract	watercolor/paper	Labat
1961	1990	6468	composition	tempera	Christie's Rome
1966	1990	9200	Azzurro n. 2	mixed media	Christie's Rome
1968	1990	32000	Composition	watercolor/paper	Martin & Chausselet
1966	1990	3960	Composition	oil	Martin & Chausselet
1961	1990	6072	June	oil	Finarte Semenzato, Milano
1973	1990	34000	Of the Pacific Garden	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1990	66000	Rhythms	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
	1990	60500	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Sotheby's New York, Arcade
1960	1990	4400	Composition Souvenirs de	gouache	Guy Loudmer
1948	1990	9240	danse	tempera/board	Guy Loudmer
1966	1990	29040	Composition	gouache	Granville
1961	1989	5214	Monotype 4507'	watercolor/paper	Stockholm Auktionsverk
1958	1989	21860	Composition	gouache/board	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1958	1989	16310	Venetian mirror	watercolor and ink/paper	Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1958	1989	1902	Morning Colour	mixed media/vellum	Auktion Burkard
1963	1989	30960	composition	tempera	Auktion Burkard
	1989	8708	Untitled	watercolor and pencil/paper	Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1954	1989	3624	Composition	gouache	Boisgirard & Associes
1971	1989	1782	Composition	ink/paper	Kunsthaus Lempertz
1971	1989	3397	Sans titre	watercolor and ink/paper	Dumousett-Debureau
1970	1989	27720	Circular	gouache/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	41800			

1954	1989	16800	Splendore orientale	tempera	Brera arte Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	1989	7938	Untitled	gouache/board	Boisgirard & Associés
1960	1989	6336	Composition	watercolor/paper	Guy Loudmer
1966	1989	7920	Sans titre	gouache	Guy Loudmer
	1989	7920	Sans titre	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1989	29700	Ikonostas Dance	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
	1989	17600	Memories	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	6600	Untitled	mixed media/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1989	28600	Paysage Imaginaire	tempera/paper	Schneider Auktionen Schneider Auktionen
1967	1989	2902	Untitled	watercolor/paper	
1962	1989	6773	Composition Fantasy yellow and blue	watercolor/paper	Germann Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich Kunsthaus
1964	1989	5805	China landscape Wafting	watercolor/paper	Lempertz
1970	1989	19030	Memories	egg tempera	Guy Loudmer
1960	1989	6336	Sans titre	watercolor/paper	Bukowski Stockholm Ketterer Kunst, Munich
1966	1989	4662	Composition	gouache	Schneider Auktionen
1963	1989	5889	Morning	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1968	1989	3676	Untitled Mountain shadows	watercolor/paper tempera/paper on board	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1989	56230	Forms and change	tempera	Christie's London, King Street
	1989	9923		watercolor/paper on board	Phillips, de Pury & Company
	1989	3473	Monotype	watercolor/paper on board	Neret-Minet Paris
1947	1989	12410	Skid Row	gouache/panel	Francis Briest
1957	1989	13200	Composition	ink/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1989	55010	Light of Spring	watercolor/paper	

1959	1989	17000	Untitled	tempera	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	1989	4000	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1959	1989	38000	Untitled	watercolor/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1962	1988	3432	Composition	tempera	Cornette De Saint Cyr
1957	1988	9240	Space ritual 16	rice paper	Perrin Schneider
1964	1988	3870	Composition in red and green	tempera	Auktionen
1966	1988	4756	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Nagel Auktionen
1958	1988	1132	Venetian mirror	watercolor/paper	Nagel Auktionen
	1988	2808	Autumn Abstract	watercolor/paper	Nagel Auktionen
1967	1988	1359	composition Abstract	watercolor/paper	Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1964	1988	2038	composition	watercolor/paper	Villa Grisebach Auktionen, Berlin
1969	1988	4371	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
1957	1988	9192	Composition	gouache	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich
	1988	1800	Untitled Yellow	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	1988	4500	Structure	gouache	Sotheby's New York
1956	1988	42000	Garden	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1955	1988	12000	Misty pastures	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1957	1988	5800	Space ritual No 16	rice paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1961	1988	4838	Composition	watercolor/paper	Eberhart Auktionen
1955	1988	12400	Composition	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	1988	10250	Composition	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1945	1988	6000	Sky world	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's New York
1957	1988	15000	Orb	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's New

					York
1954	1988	8500	Orpheus	tempera	Sotheby's New York
1954	1988	11000	Lights III	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1956	1988	2500	Landscape	tempera	Sotheby's New York
1954	1988	2000	The watchers	tempera	Sotheby's New York
	1988	770	Composition	watercolor/paper	Hauswedell & Nolte
1970	1988	19350	Blue interval	gouache	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich
1970	1988	19350	Image	gouache	Galerie Koller, AG, Zurich
	1988	8250	Untitled recto and verso	gouache/cardboard	William Doyle Galleries
1964	1988	1500	Untitled	gouache	William Doyle Galleries
1954	1988	35000	Night	tempera/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1952	1988	32000	Delta	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's New York
1965	1988	7000	Untitled	tempera	Sotheby's New York
1967	1988	2600	Senza titolo	gouache	Brera arte
1959	1988	16540	Untitled	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	1988	2646	Untitled	gouache/cardboard	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1954	1988	2811	Totemic animals	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1988	2811	Compositions	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1957	1988	4000	Composition	ink/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1966	1988	4500	Transcendence	watercolor/paper	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1988	26000	Intervals	watercolor/board	Sotheby's New York
1945	1988	7000	Inner city	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
	1987	32000	Grey surface	mixed media/paper	Brera arte
1966	1987	1276	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Christie's

					Amsterdam Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	2250	Self-portrait	gouache	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	950	Self-portrait	ink/paper	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	2000	Japanese dancer with child	watercolor and ink/paper	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	1500	Two dancing figures	gouache	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	950	Untitled, San Francisco	watercolor/paper	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	700	Dancing figures	charcoal	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	750	Man with Whip	gouache	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
	1987	800	Untitled Centreville,	gouache	Butterfields (Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco)
1965	1987	1812	Wisconsin	gouache	Nagel Auktionen
1967	1987	1812	Red birds	gouache	Nagel Auktionen
	1987	7200	Composizione	gouache	Brera arte Sotheby's New York
1955	1987	20000	Blue Canal II	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
	1987	12000	Unknown field	paper/paperboard	Sotheby's New York
1966	1987	25000	Tumult	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1973	1987	20000	Untitled	tempera/card	Sotheby's New York
1954	1987	12400	Spanish lands	tempera	Sotheby's London,

					New Bond Street
1968	1987	578	Untitled	watercolor and gouache/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
	1987	5128	Light spectrum	watercolor/paper	Dobiaschofsky Auktionen, Bern
1947	1987	4750	Skid row	gouache/board	Sotheby's New York
1961	1987	2419	Untitled	gouache	Schneider Auktionen
1969	1987	1757	Composition	watercolor and gouache/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
1966	1987	1323	abstraite	watercolor and gouache/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1963	1987	4000	Composizione	tempera	Brera arte
			Composition		
1969	1987	3168	sans titre	watercolor/paper	Perrin Sotheby's New York
1966	1987	5500	Untitled	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's New York
1968	1987	2500	Untitled	tempera/paper	Sotheby's New York
1965	1986	13110	Monotype 4506	watercolor and gouache/paper	Bukowski Stockholm
1952	1986	6500	Untitled	gouache	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	1986	10000	Apotheosis	tempera/board	Sotheby's New York
1969	1986	4000	Untitled	tempera	Sotheby's New York
1957	1986	3000	Space ritual	ink/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1964	1986	992	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1963	1986	661	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1966	1986	909	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1967	1986	793	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1958	1986	1980	Composition	gouache	Binoche et Godeau
1958	1986	3250	Untitled 1958	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1966	1986	2515	Composition	gouache	Germann

1935	1986	950	Two birds	tempera	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1950	1986	2200	Escape from Earth	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1957	1986	4000	Above the trees	paper/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1970	1986	20000	Biological secret	tempera/board	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1948	1986	9000	Times Square	tempera/cardboard	Sotheby's New York
1968	1986	793	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1968	1986	992	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1954	1986	826	Totemic animals	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1985	909	Untitled	gouache/board	Christie's London, King Street
1967	1985	1240	Untitled	gouache/board	Christie's London, King Street
1964	1985	826	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1963	1985	909	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
	1985	1900	Self portrait	ink/paper	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
	1985	9500	Seattle Streetcar	tempera/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1945	1985	26000	November grass rhythms	tempera/board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1954	1985	31000	Meditative series VIII	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1957	1985	7000	Sleep	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1959	1985	10000	Imaginary landscape	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco

1959	1985	8500	Cosmic tension	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1965	1985	45000	Drum echoes	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
	1985	36000	Blue night	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1965	1985	44000	Hidden	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1967	1985	24000	First colours of Spring	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1969	1985	18000	Released	tempera	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1961	1985	1240	Composition	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1985	826	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1985	1157	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
	1985	2977	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1965	1985	1323	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1923	1985	1300	Portrait of Paul McCool	charcoal	Sotheby's New York
1961	1985	2150	Purple Composition	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1971	1985	1760	Composition	gouache	Sotheby's New York
1968	1985	1139	Untitled	watercolor and gouache/paper	Dorotheum, Vienne
1965	1984	15710	Nature paths	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1960	1984	1984	Fantasy	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1965	1984	24810	Breathing city	tempera/paper on board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1954	1984	1075	Bird fantasy	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1960	1984	1653	Fantasy white and brown	mixed media/paper on board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street

1960	1984	1653	Hidden structure	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1984	1240	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1968	1984	909	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1968	1984	4961	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1953	1984	3696	Composition	gouache	Laurin Guilloux Buffetaud Tailleur Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
	1984	1400	Untitled	gouache	Christie's New York, Rockefeller Center
1954	1984	650	Signs	tempera	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1971	1984	661	Composition	watercolor/paper	Christie's London, King Street
1966	1984	1075	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1966	1984	1157	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1968	1984	1075	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1967	1984	1240	Untitled	gouache	Christie's London, King Street
1969	1984	1386	Echevetrement vegetal	watercolor and ink/paper	Catherine Charbonneaux Sotheby's New York
1952	1984	2000	Composition	watercolor/paper	Binoche et Godeau
1960	1984	1254	Composition	gouache/board	Sotheby's New York
1955	1984	8000	Composition	tempera/paper on board	Bonhams & Butterfields San Francisco
1946	1984	1200	Composition Composition	watercolor/paper	Cornette De Saint Cyr
1970	1983	9900	fond vieux rose	gouache watercolor and gouache/paper on board	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1961	1983	3142	Composition	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1968	1983	661	Composition	watercolor/paper	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1967	1983	992	Composition	gouache	Sotheby's London, New Bond Street
1960	1983	1488	Head	watercolor and	Sotheby's London,

				gouache/paper	New Bond Street
			New York		Christie's London,
1948	1983	4961	patterns	gouache/board	King Street
	1983	2970	Composition	gouache	Binoche et Godeau
					Sotheby's New
1970	1983	2750	Composition	gouache	York
					Christie's New
					York, Rockefeller
1949	1983	1300	Self-portraits	paper/board	Center
					Christie's New
					York, Rockefeller
1964	1983	600	Untitled	gouache	Center
					Sotheby's New
1965	1983	20000	Desert blooms	tempera	York
			Composition		French Auction
1961	1983	1135	blanche	gouache	House
			Composition en		
			bleu, rouge et		French Auction
1964	1983	818	noir	gouache	House
					Bonhams &
	1983	3000	White writing	watercolor and gouache/paper	Butterfields San
					Francisco
					Christie's London,
1966	1983	1984	Untitled	watercolor/paper	King Street
			Composition		Sotheby's New
1957	1983	2000	No. 1	paper	York
					Sotheby's London,
1954	1983	992	Abstract Figures	gouache	New Bond Street
					Sotheby's New
	1982	1400	Untitled	tempera	York
					Bonhams &
					Butterfields San
1916	1982	700	Abstraction	watercolor/paper	Francisco
					Christie's London,
1968	1982	4134	Monotype - blue	gouache	King Street
					Christie's London,
1968	1982	4465	Monotype - red	gouache	King Street
			Multiple		
1954	1982	1750	journeys	tempera	Richard Bourne
					Sotheby's New
1958	1982	5000	Red gardens	tempera	York

See "Auction Records for Mark Tobey," *AskArt: The Artists' Bluebook*, accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=AUCTION_RECORDS&artist=30110.

Appendix 2: Select Gallery and Museum Exhibitions

Helen Frankenthaler

In 1969, Frankenthaler's first retrospective exhibition was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. That same year, she was the only woman included in the show *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, an exhibition that summarized three decades of art making in New York. According to critic Amei Wallach, "That's when she began to be regarded as *the* reigning woman artist."⁶⁴⁸

Her work has regularly been exhibited both nationally and internationally throughout her career. Some of her significant solo exhibitions include: the Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery at Bennington College in Bennington, Vermont, in 2007; the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, in 2005–06; the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida, in 2003; the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, Connecticut in 2002; the Neuberger Museum of Art, State University of New York, in Purchase, New York, in 1999; the Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, Georgia in 1998; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1993; the Meredith Long Gallery, Houston, Texas, in 1993 (and again in 2004); Knoedler & Company, New York, in 1992 and 2008; The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, in 1989; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1985 and 1998; the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1981; the Corcoran

⁶⁴⁸ Amei Wallach, "Arts and Craftiness," *Ms.* 1-2, (July 18, 1989): 26.

Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1975; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1969; the David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in 1965 and 1973; André Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1959 and 1993; The Jewish Museum, New York, in 1960; Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, in 1951 and 1959.⁶⁴⁹

Frankenthaler's inclusion in group shows is extensive. Highlights of these exhibitions include: *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940–1976*, The Jewish Museum, New York, in 2008; *Color as Field: American Painting 1950–1975*, American Federation of Arts, toured the United States, 2007; *The Shape of Colour: Excursions in Colour Field Art, 1950–2005*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, in 2005; *Abstrakter Expressionismus in Amerika: Lee Krasner, Hedda Sterne, Elaine de Kooning, Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler*, Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany in 2001; *Abstraction in the Twentieth-Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, in 1996; *The Gestural Impulse*, Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1989; *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945–1986*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California, in 1986; *The Fifties: Aspects of Painting in New York*, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, in 1980; *American Painting of the 1970s*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, in 1978; *Color as Language*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1975; *The Great Decade of American Abstraction: Modernist Art 1960–1970*, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, in 1974; *Abstract Painting in the 70s*,

⁶⁴⁹ "Helen Frankenthaler," accessed July 5, 2011, http://www.knoedlgallery.com/artists/helen_frankenthaler/biography.html.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, in 1972; *Younger Abstract Expressionists of the Fifties*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1971; *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1969; *XXXIII International Biennial Exhibition of Art*, United States Pavilion, Venice, in 1966 (with Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jules Olitski); *Two Decades of Modern Painting*, International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1966; *Painting and Sculpture of a Decade 1954–1964*, The Tate Gallery, London, England, in 1965; *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, in 1964; *New Directions in American Art*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1963; *American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1961; *Documenta II: Kunst nach 1945*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany, in 1959; *Première Biennale de Paris*, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France, in 1959; *Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Painting and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth-Century American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1958; *Artists of the New York School Second Generation*, The Jewish Museum, New York, in 1957; *9th Street: Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture*, 60th East 9th Street, New York in 1951; *Fifteen Unknowns Selected by Artists of the Kootz Gallery*, Kootz Gallery, New York, in 1950.⁶⁵⁰ As the titles of these exhibitions indicate, curators and gallery owners often categorized Frankenthaler within the context of her style.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

Until the later 1950s, Frankenthaler exhibited her work at the gallery Tibor de Nagy. Knoedler and Company, and Ameringer, McEnery, and Yohe (formerly Ameringer/Howard) also represented the artist. These blue-chip, first rate galleries suggest her art world and market place success, though the focus on her gender nevertheless limited her soaring potential.

Norman Lewis

In 1998, Lewis's work was shown in a series of important solo museum shows. First, *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings, 1946-1977*, traveled from The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, to the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Dayton Art Institute in Dayton, Ohio. In 2008, the St. Louis Art Museum in St. Louis, Missouri presented *Norman Lewis, Twilight Sounds*.⁶⁵¹

Norman Lewis has been featured in solo exhibitions from 1936 to 2008, and in group shows from 1934 to 2011. These aspects of his exhibition history reveal his recognition, albeit limited, throughout his career. Importantly, too, is the fact that curators included Lewis in exhibitions centered on race, rarely dissociating the formal characteristics of his work from his biography. Represented by Marian Willard of The Willard Gallery in New York, Lewis's work has been shown in exhibitions across the country.

Issues of race permeated Lewis's relationship with Willard. The artist explains, "I feel she thinks being an artist is sufficient but she ignores the race

⁶⁵¹ "Norman Lewis," accessed July 16, 2012, http://michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/artists_represented.php?i=158&m=history.

question which is very prevalent and it hinders many of the things she wanted to do for me.”⁶⁵²

His work was featured in solo exhibitions in 1936 and 1937 at the Harlem Artists Guild in New York; the Harlem Art Center, New York in 1937, 1938, and 1939; the Willard Gallery in New York, in 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1957, 1961, and 1964. The artist was not included in another one-person show until the 1970s, with *Norman Lewis: A Retrospective*, in 1976 at The Graduate School, University Center, City College, New York. Another significant period of time passed without a solo exhibition, until Lewis’s 1985 *Norman Lewis: The Black Paintings*, at Robeson Center Gallery, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey, followed by *From the Harlem Renaissance to Abstraction* at the Kenkeleba Gallery in New York, in 1989. The following decade opened with *Norman Lewis Returns, Paintings from the Harlem Renaissance*, at the Cotton Exchange Gallery in Augusta, Georgia, and *Norman Lewis* at the Berman/Daferner Gallery in New York, in 1993. In 1994, his work was featured in *The Second Transition: 1947-1951 Abstractions* at A.F.T.U./Bill Hodges Gallery, New York, followed in 1997 by *Norman Lewis: Social Realism to Abstraction 1933-48*, at the Bill Hodges Gallery in New York, and *Norman Lewis*, at Ben Shahn Galleries, William Paterson College, Wayne, New Jersey.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² Norman Lewis, “Oral History Interview with Norman Lewis,” interview by Henri Ghent, July 20, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/lewis68.htm>.

⁶⁵³ “Norman Lewis,” http://michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/artists_represented.php?i=129&m=history.

The June Kelly Gallery in New York presented *1960's: Paintings and Works on Paper*, and the Bill Hodges Gallery, New York, organized *Norman W. Lewis: 25 Highly Important Paintings*, in 1998. In 1999, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York, presented *Intuitive Markings: Works on Paper, 1945-1975*, and G.R. N'Namdi in Chicago, Illinois, displayed *Norman Lewis*; both shows received critical attention. In 2002, the Bill Hodges Gallery in New York, mounted *Norman Lewis: Linear Abstractions*, followed by another one-person exhibition at Bill Hodges in 2004, *Norman Lewis: Master Paintings from 1944-1975*.⁶⁵⁴

Lewis has been included in a range of group exhibitions, beginning with a showing in 1934 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Salon of Contemporary Negro Art, New York, Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, Tennessee, and the Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, in 1939; and the Tanner Art Galleries in Chicago, Illinois, and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, in 1940. Other highlights of these group exhibitions include: the Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey, the G Place Gallery in Washington, DC, and the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1944; inclusion in a 1949 show at Studio 35, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1951; the Norfolk Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1952; the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, as well as in the United States Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy, in 1956, and the Museum of Art at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Completing the major showings in the 1950s, Lewis was included in a group exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, in 1958. He

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

was included in limited group shows in the 1960s: the City College in New York, in 1967, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1969.⁶⁵⁵

Beginning in the 1970s, Lewis's work was featured in group exhibitions held at major museums across the country and in Europe. For instance, in 1971, his work was shown at the Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey, The Brooklyn Museum, in Brooklyn, New York, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy, and the Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture in Grenoble, France. Museum inclusion continued that decade, with showings at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, California, and in 1978 at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.⁶⁵⁶

In the 1980s, he was included in group shows at a range of exhibition spaces, such as the Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, Hempstead, New York, in 1983; The Art Museum Association of America, Bellevue Art Museum, in Bellevue, Washington, in 1985; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library in New York, in 1988. His inclusion in group shows since the 1990s include: the Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, in 1991; the Terra Museum in Chicago, Illinois, The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, the Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio, and the Tate Gallery in London, England, in 1992; the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Philadelphia, and The High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1993; The Art Museum, Rhode Island School of Design,

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

Providence, Rhode Island, in 1994; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1996; the Flint Institute of Arts, in Flint, Michigan, in 1999; the New York Historical Society in New York in 2003; the Bermuda National Gallery in Hamilton, Bermuda, in 2007; The Jewish Museum in New York, in 2008; the Tate Liverpool in Liverpool, England, in 2010; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 2011.

Although Lewis's work has been included in major institutions across the United States and Europe, the themes of the group exhibitions are revealing. The majority of the shows have had a race-based focus, evident in the titles. From *Exhibition of the Art of the American Negro (1851-1940)*, at the Tanner Art Galleries, Chicago, Illinois, and the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, in 1940, to *American Negro Art* at the Downtown Gallery in New York in 1940, to *The Negro Artist Comes of Age*, at the Albany Institute of History and Art in Albany, New York, in 1945, to *The Evolution of Afro-American Artists; 1800-1950* at the City College, New York, in 1967, *Homage to Martin Luther King* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1969, and *Black Artists: New York/Boston* at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, in 1970, *Black Artists: Two Generations* at the Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, in 1971, and the major show, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, California, the focus has been primarily to situate Lewis within a larger but limited context of African American art production. This tendency continued throughout the 1980s and to the present, with *Celebrating Contemporary American Black Artists*, Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, Hempstead, New York, in 1983; *Hidden Heritage: Afro-*

American Art, 1800-1950, The Art Museum Association of America, Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, Washington, in 1985; and in 1989, *The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism*, at the Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC, the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, California, the Duke University Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina, the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Houston, Texas, and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York.⁶⁵⁷

Curators continued to include Lewis in shows organized around race in the 1990s and 2000s. Evidencing this trend are the following group shows: *The Search for Freedom: African-American Abstract Painting, 1945-1975*, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, New York in 1991; *African-American Art: Twentieth-Century Masterworks*, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, *Empowerment: The Art of African American Artists*, Krasdale Gallery, White Plains, New York, and *25 Years of African-American Art*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York; *Art by African-Americans in the Collection of the New Jersey State Museum*, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey, in 1998; *Challenge of the Modern: African American Artists, 1925-1945*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, in 2003; *Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, England; and *Splendor of Dynamic Structure: Celebrating 75 Years of the American Abstract Artists*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

Alma Thomas

Franz Bader in Washington, DC, and Martha Jackson in New York, represented Thomas; these galleries included her in a host of exhibitions. Additionally, according to art critic Benjamin Forgey, in the mid-1960s, Thomas, “discovered the combination of abstract patterns and beautiful pure colors that was to open the doors of many of the nation’s top museums to her paintings.”⁶⁵⁹ In fact, just after the first decade in which she committed her life solely to painting, Thomas exhibited her paintings at influential museums in Washington, DC, and New York. Forgey discusses her success, noting, “Her first one-woman exhibition was mounted when she was 69. In 1976 she became the second living Washington artist whose work was acquired for the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.”⁶⁶⁰

In 1972, major museum attention on Thomas piqued. First, Thomas showed her work in a one-person show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, in an exhibition entitled, *Alma W. Thomas*. The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, also exhibited the artist in a solo show that year, with *Alma W. Thomas: Retrospective Exhibition*.

The decade of the 1980s opened with a major exhibition of Thomas’s work, just three years after the artist’s death. In 1981, the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, assembled the exhibition, *A Life in Art: Alma Thomas, 1891-1978*, supplemented by Merry A. Foresta’s significant

⁶⁵⁹ Benjamin Forgey, “Alma W. Thomas Dies; Famed District Painter,” *The Washington Star*, February 25, 1978, A-7.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

exhibition catalogue that chronicled the artist's life and art.⁶⁶¹ Another catalogue featuring a range of scholarly considerations of her work accompanied a significant show, in 1998, entitled *Alma W. Thomas: A Retrospective of the Paintings*, at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, Indiana.⁶⁶² Contributors to the catalogue included, art historians Ann Gibson and Jonathan P. Binstock, and artist Jacob Kainen, thus validating the importance of Thomas's output and contributions to the art world.⁶⁶³ This recognition is significant because it represents a shift from earlier critical and scant scholarly attention, which rarely illuminated Thomas's position within art history.

Thus, although primarily shown in group exhibitions, curators have included Thomas's work in a limited number of solo shows. From a small 1959 exhibition at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, followed by exhibitions of her watercolor paintings in 1960, 1961, and 1962 at the DuPont Theatre Art Gallery, galleries and museums provided significant showings beginning in the mid-1960s. For example, she had a 1966 retrospective exhibition at Howard University Gallery of Art that surveyed her painting endeavors even before she retired from teaching, followed by a show at the Margaret Dickey Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in 1967 (and later in 1975), and then an exhibition, *Alma Thomas: Recent Paintings*, at Franz Bader Gallery, Washington, DC, (with additional shows there in 1970 and 1974. It was indeed in the early 1970s that Thomas was met with museum and

⁶⁶¹ See Merry A. Foresta, *A Life in Art: Alma Thomas, 1891-1978*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981).

⁶⁶² See *Alma W. Thomas, A Retrospective of the Paintings*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998).

⁶⁶³ "Alma Thomas," accessed July 16, 2012, http://michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/artists_represented.php?i=158&m=history.

gallery attention. In 1971, her exhibition *Recent Paintings by Alma W. Thomas: Earth and Space Series, 1961-1971*, at Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, set the tone for the decade, as the 1970s marks the period in which Thomas was included in exhibitions in major New York museums.⁶⁶⁴

In 1973, she had a one-person show, *Alma W. Thomas: Paintings*, at Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, followed by *Alma W. Thomas: Recent Paintings*, at the H.C. Taylor Art Gallery, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina and *Alma W. Thomas: Recent Paintings, 1975-1976*, at Martha Jackson Gallery, in 1976.⁶⁶⁵ In 2001, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York, mounted the one-person show, *Alma Thomas: Phantasmagoria, Major Paintings from the 1970s*.⁶⁶⁶

Thomas's inclusion in group exhibitions is much more extensive than the limited solo shows. Additionally, these shows reach farther back, and span the artist's career, with a group show as recent as 2010. Highlights include exhibitions at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, in 1954, 1955, and 1960; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1955, 1956, 1959, and 1977; American University, Washington, DC, in 1959; the Dimock Gallery at George Washington University in Washington, DC, in 1968; the Lee Nordness Gallery in New York in 1969; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1971; a 1974 show at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in Indianapolis, Indiana; Los Angeles County Museum

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

of Art, Los Angeles, California, in 1976; the Kenkeleba House in New York in 1986; a 1992 group show at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, in 1996; the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in 2003; the Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, in 2008; and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, in 2010.⁶⁶⁷

These exhibitions evidence the fact that Thomas received recognition within the art world during her career, although many of the shows and critical reviews focused on her race and gender.

It is less the multitude of group shows in which Thomas's work has been included, and more the thematic aspects of the shows that reveal how galleries and museums categorized this artist. The majority of her group shows are organized by race and gender. This reception indicates a continued concern for examining Thomas's work through the lens of race and gender, with less interest in formal comparisons of her work with other artists. This trend continued throughout her career, exemplified by the following exhibitions: *8th Annual Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures and Prints by Negro Artists*, Trevor Arnett Library, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, in 1952, 1954, 1964, and 1970; *Dimensions of Black*, at the La Jolla Museum of Art, La Jolla, California, and *Afro-American Artists: New York and Boston*, The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1970; *Black American Artists/71*, Lobby Gallery, Illinois Bell Telephone, Chicago, Illinois, and *Contemporary Black Artists in America* at the Whitney Museum of American Art,

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

New York, New York, and The Art Barn, Washington, DC, in 1971; *Color and Image: Six Artists from Washington, DC*, University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, Iowa, and *Afro-American Art*, Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1975; *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California, in 1976; *Black Artists/South*, Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, Alabama, and *Reflections of a Southern Heritage: Twentieth-Century Black Artists of the Southeast*, Gibbes Art Gallery, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1979.⁶⁶⁸

Museums and galleries show their focus on Thomas's gender by organizing exhibitions such as: *Black Matri-Images: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings by Laura Wheeler Waring and Paintings and Prints by Elizabeth Catlett, Lois Jones, Alma W. Thomas*, Morgan State College Gallery of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, in 1972; *Woman's Work: American Art 1974*, Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1974; *11 in New York*, Women's Interart Center Inc., New York, New York, in 1975; *Women Artists in Washington Collections*, University of Maryland Art Gallery and Women's Caucus for the Arts, College Park, Maryland; *Celebrating Contemporary American Black Artists*, Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, Hempstead, New York, in 1983; *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art*, Center Gallery of Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and *Art in Washington and Its Afro-American Presence, 1940-1970*, Washington Projects for the Arts, Washington, DC, in 1985; *African-American Artists, 1880-1987: Selections from the Evans-Tibbs Collection*, Smithsonian Institution Traveling

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

Exhibition Service, Washington, DC, in 1989; *Free Within Ourselves: African-American Artists in the Collection of the National Museum of American Art*, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, in 1992; *Tradition & Conflict: A Visual History of African-Americans in Art, nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Ledbetter Lusk Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee, in 1998; *To Conserve A Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York, in 1999; *In the Spirit of Martin: The Living Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American Art, Detroit, Michigan, in 2002; *Five African American Artists*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 2003; and *African American Art: 200 Years*, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, New York, in 2008.⁶⁶⁹

Mark Tobey

Represented by Marian Willard of The Willard Gallery in New York, Tobey's one-person exhibitions are voluminous. Selections include: the Arts Club of Chicago in 1928; the Cornish School in Seattle, Washington, in 1930; the Paul Elder Gallery in San Francisco, California, and the Beaux Arts Gallery in London, England, in 1934; the Seattle Art Museum in Seattle, Washington, in 1935, 1942 and 1955; the Willard Gallery in New York, in 1942, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1953, 1954, 1957; the Portland Art Museum in Portland, Oregon, in 1945; the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, California and the Margaret Brown Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1951; the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, in 1952; the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois,

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris, France, and the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, England, in 1955; the Galerie Sandler in Paris, France, in 1958; the St. Albans School in Washington, DC, in 1959; Frederic Hobbs Fine Art, San Francisco, California, and the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, Germany, in 1960; Galerie Beyeler in Basel, Switzerland, the Royal S. Marks Gallery in New York, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, France, in 1961; The Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, England, the Seattle World's Fair in Seattle, Washington, the Otto Seligman Gallery in Seattle, Washington, The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, in 1962,⁶⁷⁰ *Tobey's 80*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, 1970, *Tribute to Mark Tobey*, National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, DC, in 1974,⁶⁷¹ *Mark Tobey: City Paintings*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1984,⁶⁷² *Mark Tobey: A Centennial Exhibition*, Galerie Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland, 1990.⁶⁷³

Tobey's inclusion in group exhibitions is pervasive as well, and span the major galleries and museums around the world. These national and international shows include: *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1930; *Americans* at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1931; *American Art Today* at the New York World's Fair in New York, in 1939; *Nineteenth International Exhibition of Watercolors* at the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, in 1940; *Artists for*

⁶⁷⁰ William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 95.

⁶⁷¹ "Mark Tobey," accessed July 23, 2012, <http://www.moellerfineart.com/artists/mark-tobey/>.

⁶⁷² "Past Exhibitions, Mark Tobey: City Paintings," accessed July 23, 2012, <http://www.nga.gov/past/data/exh509.shtm>.

⁶⁷³ Wolfgang M. Freitag, *Art Books: A Basic Bibliography of Artists* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1997), 407.

Victory at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in 1942; *Romantic Painting in America* at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, in 1943; *13th International Watercolor Exhibition* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, *31st Annual Exhibition of Northwest Artists* at the Seattle Art Museum in Seattle, Washington, *2nd Annual Portrait of America Exhibition* at Rockefeller Center, New York, and *Annual Exhibition* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, New York, 1945; *Contemporary American Paintings* at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, *American Paintings from the 18th Century to the Present* at the Tate Gallery in London, England, and *Fourteen Americans* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1946; *U.S. Representation* at the XXIV Biennale in Venice, Italy in 1948; *The Intrasubjectives* at the Samuel M. Kootz Gallery, New York, in 1949; *American Painting Today* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1950; *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Significant American Painting* at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin, *American Vanguard for Paris* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, in 1951,⁶⁷⁴ and more recently, *Sounds of the Inner Eye: John Cage, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves*, Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Washington, in 2002,⁶⁷⁵ and *Night Sounds: Nocturnal Visions of Mark Tobey and Morris Graves*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, in 2006.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁴ Seitz, *Mark Tobey*, 95-96.

⁶⁷⁵ “Sounds of the Inner Eye: John Cage, Mark Tobey and Morris Graves,” accessed July 23, 2012, <http://www.museumofglassstore.org/Sounds-of-the-Inner-Eye-br-John-Cage-Mark-Tobey-and-Morris-Graves--P2541C22.aspx>.

⁶⁷⁶ “Past Exhibitions, Night Sounds: Nocturnal Visions of Mark Tobey and Morris Graves,” accessed July 23, 2012, <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/exhibit/exhibitDetail.asp?eventID=8876>.

Figures

Figure 1.
Helen Frankenthaler
Abstract Landscape, 1951
Oil on sized, primed canvas
69" x 71 7/8"
Private Collection

Figure 2.
Helen Frankenthaler
Mountains and Sea, 1952
Oil in canvas
86 5/8" x 117 1/4"
Collection Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc., on extended loan to the National
Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 3.
Helen Frankenthaler
Garden Maze, 1952
Oil on sized, primed canvas
58" x 51 ¼"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen

Figure 4.
Helen Frankenthaler
10/29/52, 1952
Oil on canvas
65" x 66 ½"
Private Collection

Figure 5.
Helen Frankenthaler
Shatter, 1953
Oil on canvas
48 ½" x 54"
Private Collection

Figure 6.
Helen Frankenthaler
Nude, 1958
Oil on canvas
101½" x 45 ½"
Private Collection

Figure 7.
Helen Frankenthaler
Winter Figure with Black Overhead, 1959
Oil on sized, primed canvas
84" x 53"
Private Collection

Figure 8.
Helen Frankenthaler
Yellow Caterpillar, 1961
Oil on canvas
93 3/4" x 120"
Private Collection

Figure 9.
Helen Frankenthaler
Small's Paradise, 1964
Acrylic on canvas
100" x 93 5/8"
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of George L. Erion

Figure 10.
Helen Frankenthaler
Nadir Rising, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
55 ½" x 49"
Private Collection

Figure 11.
Norman Lewis
Johnny the Wanderer, 1933
Oil on canvas
37" x 30 3/4"
Collection of Tarin M. Fuller

Figure 12.
Norman Lewis
Yellow Hat, 1936
Oil on burlap
36 ½" x 26"
Collection of Mrs. Ouida Lewis

Figure 13.
Norman Lewis
Blending, 1951
Oil on canvas
54" x 41 7/8"
Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum, Utica, New York

Figure 14.
Norman Lewis
Migrating Birds, 1953
Oil on linen
40" x 60"
Private Collection

Figure 15.
Norman Lewis
Processional, 1965
Oil on canvas
38 1/4" x 57 3/4"
Norman Lewis Collection

Figure 16.
Alma Thomas
Study of a Young Girl, ca. 1955
Oil on fiberboard
35 ³/₄" x 27 ³/₄"
Barnett-Aden Collection

Figure 17.
Alma Thomas
Blue and Brown Still Life, 1958
Oil on fiberboard
23 7/8" x 32"
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Vincent Melzac, Arlington, Virginia, 1976

Figure 18.
Alma Thomas
Spring Fantasy, 1963
Watercolor on paper
22 1/8" x 29 7/8"
In the Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Ida Jervis in Memory of Alma Thomas

Figure 19.
Alma Thomas
Untitled, 1966
Watercolor on paper
18" x 23 3/4"
The Estate of Franz Bader

Figure 20.
Alma Thomas
Air View of Spring Nursery, 1966
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 48"
The Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia
Gift of the Columbus-Phenix City National Association of Negro Business Women
and of the artist

Figure 21.
Alma Thomas
Red Violet Nursery Viewed from Above, ca. 1970
Acrylic on canvas
50" x 48"
Private Collection

Figure 22.
Alma Thomas
Springtime in Washington, 1971
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 48"
Private Collection

Figure 23.
Alma Thomas
Cherry Blossom Symphony, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
68 ½" x 53 ½"
Collection of Charles Arnold Hart

Figure 24.
Alma Thomas
Babbling Brook and Whistling Poplar Trees Symphony, 1976
Acrylic on canvas
72" x 52"
Collection of Sherman K. and Essie Green-Edmiston

Figure 25.
Mark Tobey
Broadway, 1935-1936
Tempera on fiberboard
26" x 19 ¼"
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 26.
Mark Tobey
Broadway Boogie, 1942
Tempera on composition board
31 3/8" x 24 3/8"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Weinstein, Seattle, Washington

Figure 27.
Mark Tobey
Drift of Summer, 1942
Tempera
28" x 22"
Collection of Wright Ludington, Santa Barbara, California

Figure 28.
Mark Tobey
Remembrance in Light, 1942
Tempera on board
13 3/8" x 9 3/8"
Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho

Figure 29.
Mark Tobey
Written Over the Plains, 1950
Mixed media on paper mounted on masonite
30 1/8" x 40"
San Francisco Museum of Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Smith

Figure 30.
Mark Tobey
Meditative Series VIII, 1954
Tempera on paper
17 7/8" x 11 3/4"
Private Collection

Figure 31.
Mark Tobey
Space Ritual # 4, 1957
Brush and Sumi ink on paper
21 1/8" x 29 1/4"
Smith College Museum of Art

Figure 32.
Mark Tobey
Homage to Rameau, 1960
Tempera on black paper
6 ³/₄" x 8"
Willard Gallery, New York

Figure 33.
Artists' Sessions at Studio 35, Photograph by Max Yavno, 1950
Includes Norman Lewis, Hans Hofmann, Alfred Barr, Robert Motherwell,
Willem de Kooning, Louise Bourgeois, Hedda Sterne, Barnett Newman

Figure 34.
“Irascible Group of Advanced Artists,” 1951
Life magazine
Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, Adolph Gottlieb,
and Hedda Sterne (excludes Norman Lewis)

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