



Smithsonian Associates

How the Ninth Street Women Conquered the Art World

Nancy G. Heller

Tuesday, March 25, 2025 - 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

WOMEN ARTISTS, GENERAL

Reference Books:

- Delia Gaze (ed.), *Dictionary of Women Artists*, 2 vols. (Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997)
Jules Heller and Nancy G. Heller (eds.), *North American Women Artists of the 20th Century: A Biographical Dictionary* (Garland Press, 1995)
Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, *American Women Artists* (Avon Books, 1986)

Historical Overviews:

- Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 5th ed. (Thames & Hudson, 2020)
Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists: An Illustrated History*, 4th ed. (Abbeville Press, 2004)
Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (eds.), *Art and Sexual Politics* (Collier, 1973)

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

- Dore Ashton, *The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning*, 1965
Mary Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women*, 2017
Joan Marter (ed.), *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, 1997

LEE KRASNER

- Ellen Landau, *Lee Krasner: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 1995
Gail Levin, *Lee Krasner: A Biography*, 2011

ELAINE DE KOONING

- Brandon Brame Fortune, et al, *Elaine de Kooning: Portraits*, 2015
Lee Hall, *Elaine & Bill: Portrait of a Marriage*, 1993
Elaine de Kooning, *The Spirit of Abstract Expressionism: Selected Writings*, 1994

GRACE HARTIGAN

- Cathy Curtis, *Restless Ambition: Grace Hartigan, Painter*, 2015

Robert Mattison, *Grace Hartigan: A Painter's World*, 1990

JOAN MITCHELL

Patricia Albers, *Joan Mitchell: Lady Painter, A Life*, 2011

Sarah Roberts (et al), *Joan Mitchell*, 2021

HELEN FRANKENTHALER

Bill Berkson, *Helen Frankenthaler: Paintings, 1961-1973*, 2010

John Elderfield, et al, *Line into Color, Color into Line: Helen Frankenthaler, Paintings, 1962-1987*, 2017

Katharina Gross, et al, *Helen Frankenthaler: Late Works, 1988-2009*, 2022

Alexander Nemerov, *Fierce Poise: Helen Frankenthaler and 1950s New York*, 2021

NAMES, CONCEPTS, & TERMS

Abstract Expressionism (a.k.a. The New York School; “the triumph of American painting”) modernism (in early 20th-century art; = a movement toward abstraction)

American Scene Painting (e.g., Thomas Hart Benton)

Jackson Pollock’s “dripped”/poured painting technique

The 9th Street Show (1951, NYC)

gestural painting (where brushstrokes, drips are visible)

process-oriented art (vs. emphasizing the finished product)

“The Happy Housewife” stereotype in 1950s America

The Cedar Bar (a.k.a. The Cedar Tavern, or simply “The Cedar”)

balancing children with a fulltime painting career; (illegal) abortions

the seeming prevalence of self-destructive behavior (e.g., alcoholism) and actual suicide

some other notable (male) AbEx painters: Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline

LIFE magazine as a major influence on/reflection of American culture

“First-Generation” vs. “Second-Generation” AbEx artists

Hans Hofmann (pioneering German abstract painter, ran an important NYC art school)

Works Progress Administration (WPA)

Federal Arts Project (FAP—part of the WPA)

the Artists Union

Springs, in East Hampton, Long Island, NY

Green River Cemetery (in Springs, NY; final resting place of Pollock, Krasner, Elaine de Kooning)

“commercial” art (what we now call graphic design, illustration)

multiple sexual partners, spouses

figurative painting vs. “pure” abstraction

Barney Rosset (founder/editor of Grove Press & Evergreen Review; husband of Joan Mitchell)

Jean-Paul Riopelle (French-Canadian painter; longtime lover of Joan Mitchell)

polyptych (multi-panel painting)

Vétheuil, France; c.50 miles NW of Paris; where Mitchell spent her last 25 years.

NYC's "Upper East Side" vs. "downtown" (Greenwich Village)
 Rufino Tamayo (noted Mexican muralist; an early teacher of Helen Frankenthaler's)
 Paul Feeley (an American abstract painter, Frankenthaler's teacher at Bennington College)
 Harold Rosenberg (influential NYC art critic)
 Clement Greenberg (another influential art critic and essayist; early champion of AbEx and Frankenthaler's lover, 1950-55)
 "stain" painting, invented by Frankenthaler; led to Color Field paintings of Morris Louis, et al
 Robert Motherwell (pioneering AbEx painter and writer; married to Frankenthaler, 1958-1971)
 Stephen DuBrul (investment banker and Frankenthaler's husband, 1994-2011)
 parochet (the curtain that covers the ark [cabinet, where Torah is kept] in a synagogue)
 Pop Art & Minimalism, supplanted AbEx as the "hot," new avant-garde movements, c.1960+
 AbEx sculptors included Dorothy Dehner, Herbert Ferber, Theodore Roszak, Seymour Lipton, & Ibram Lassaw.
 additional pioneering AbEx painters include: Norman Lewis, Janet Sobel, James Brooks, & Esteban Vicente.
 younger AbEx painters include: Bill Jensen, Jamie Nares, & Julie Mehretu.

PRINCIPAL ARTWORKS DISCUSSED (based on the order in which they were presented)

Jackson Pollock, "Number 1, 1949," 1949

Lee Krasner, "Blue Painting," 1946
 " " , "Bald Eagle," 1955 (collage)
 " " , "Prophecy," 1956

Willem de Kooning, "Woman I," 1950-52

Elaine de Kooning, "Portrait of Harold Rosenberg," 1956
 " " " , portrait series of President John F. Kennedy, 1962-63
 " " " , series of paintings of baseball & basketball players, mid-1950s+

Grace Hartigan, "The Cedar Bar," 1951
 " " , "The King is Dead," 1950
 " " , "Grand Street Brides," 1954
 " " , "River Bathers," 1953

Joan Mitchell, "Ladybug," 1957
 " " , "George Went Swimming at Barnes Hole, But it Got Too Cold," 1957
 " " , "La Vie en Rose," 1979

Helen Frankenthaler, "Painted on 21st Street," 1950
 " " , "Mountains and Sea," 1952

Helen Frankenthaler, "Before the Caves," 1958

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Pollock-Krasner House & Study Center (E. Hampton, NY); offers public tours

Elaine de Kooning House (E. Hampton, NY); sponsors cultural events

"Pollock" (feature film,) directed by and starring Ed Harris, 2000 (with Marcia Gay Harden as Krasner)

"Robert Motherwell and the New York School: Storming the Citadel," 1991 documentary film directed by Catherine Tatge; includes interesting material about the other Abstract Expressionists

"Stanley Whitney on Joan Mitchell," 6 ½-minute video in which this emeritus painting professor clearly and vividly explains why Mitchell's work is so remarkable. Produced in 2021 by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and accessible via YouTube

Joan Mitchell Foundation, based in New Orleans; awards fellowships, grants, artist residencies, organizational support

Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, based in NYC; also offers grants, publications, etc.

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