



Understanding Modern Art

Dr. Nancy G. Heller

Tuesdays, July 29 to August 26, 2025 – 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELEVANT SURVEYS & PRIMARY SOURCES:

- Richard S. Brettell, *Modern Art, 1851-1929: Capitalism and Representation* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Penelope Curtis, *Sculpture: 1900-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1999)
- David Joselit, *American Art Since 1945* (Thames & Hudson, 2003)
- Lisa Phillips, *The American Century: Art & Culture, 1950-2000* (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999)
- Nikos Stangos (ed.), *Concepts of Modern Art: Fauvism to Postmodernism* (Thames & Hudson, 3rd ed., 2003)

USEFUL, BUT DIFFICULT TO LABEL:

- Robert Atkins, *ArtSpeak: A Guide to Contemporary Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords, 1945 to the Present* (Abbeville, 1997)
- “ ”, *ArtSpoke: A Guide to Modern Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords, 1848 – 1944* (Abbeville, 1993)
- Nancy G. Heller, *Why a Painting is Like a Pizza: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Modern Art* (Princeton University Press, 2002)

PARTICULAR MOVEMENTS/ARTISTS: Books & Films

--FAUVE ART

- John Elderfield, *The “Wild Beasts”: Fauvism and Its Affinities* (Museum of Modern Art, 1976)
- Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869-1908* (Hamish Hamilton, 1998)
- “ ”, *Matisse the Master: A Life of Henri Matisse, Vol. II, The Conquest of Colour, 1909-1954* (Hamish Hamilton, 2005)

--EXPRESSIONISM

- Frances Carey and Max Egremont, *Portrait of the Artist: Käthe Kollwitz* (The British Museum Press, 2019)
- Jill Lloyd and Janis Staggs (eds.), *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* (Neue Galerie, 2019)
- Victor H. Meisel (ed.), *Voices of German Expressionism* (Abrams, 2003)
- Degenerate Art*, a documentary film based on the re infamous 1937 exhibition of art censored by the Nazis, directed by David Grubin, 1993.
- The Green Table*, a documentary film about the reconstruction of Kurt Jooss's 1932 Expressionist dance piece, plus a performance of it by the Joffrey Ballet.

Pina, a documentary film about the Neo-Expressionist dancer/choreographer Pina Bausch (1940-2009), directed by Wim Wenders and released in 2011.

--CUBISM

Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and 20th-Century Art* (Abrams, 1966)

William Rubin (ed.), *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective* (Museum of Modern Art, 1980)

“ ” , et al, *New Ways of Seeing: Picasso, Braque, and the Cubist Revolution*, a documentary film about the 1989 exhibition.

Bob Hercules (director), *Joffrey: Maverick of American Dance* (part of PBS t.v. series *American Masters*, originally broadcast in 2012 but available on YouTube; a documentary about reconstructing, and the Joffrey Ballet performing, the Cubist ballet *Parade*.

--DADA

David Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (Abrams, 1969)

--SURREALISM

Mary Ann Caws, *Surrealism* (Phaidon, 2004)

Hayden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (Harper & Row, 1983)

The Definitive Dalí: A Lifetime Retrospective, documentary film directed by Adam Low, 1986

Frida: a feature film starring Salma Hayek and Alfred Molina; directed by Julie Taymor, 2002

--ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Dore Ashton, *The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning* (Viking, 1973)

Mary Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler—Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*. (Little, Brown and Company, 2018)

Jackson Pollock, a short documentary film by Hans Namuth, 1951.

Pollock, a feature film directed by, and starring, Ed Harris, 2000.

Irving Sandler, *Abstract Expressionism and the American Experience: A Reevaluation* (Hudson Hills, 2009)

OTHER RESOURCES:

The Matisse Museum in Nice, France;

Käthe Kollwitz museums in Berlin, Cologne, and Moritzburg (Germany) and Koekelare (Belgium);

The Ernst Barlach Museum in Hamburg, Germany;

The Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg, Germany;

Erich Mendelsohn's *Einstein Tower* in Potsdam, Germany;

Picasso museums in Barcelona and Málaga (Spain) + Paris, France;

The Marcel Duchamp collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art;

Salvador Dalí museums in Figueres, Spain and St. Petersburg, Florida;

The Frida Kahlo museum/house in Coyoacán, a suburb of México City;
The Pollock-Krasner House (East Hampton, Long Island, NY).

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PRINCIPAL CONCEPTS, TERMS, & NAMES:

Fauvism, Fauve art, *les fauves*
The *Salon d'Automne* of 1905
Gertrude & Leo Stein
The Cone Sisters

"Degenerate" art/artists
Neo-Expressionism in the 1980s

Cubism: Cézannian, Analytic, Synthetic, + numerous personal variations
collage
international "offshoots" of Cubism, including Italian Futurism, English Vorticism, French
Orphism, U.S. Synchronism, Dutch Neoplasticism (De Stijl), & Russian Suprematism
"pure" abstraction (nonrepresentational/nonobjective art)
"white-on-white" paintings (as early as 1918--by Kasimir Malevich), + pioneering abstraction by
Hilma Af Klint.
Fernand Léger's experimental short film, *Le ballet mécanique* (1924)
Yazmina Reza's 1994 play, *Art* (revolves around a white-on-white painting)

The Great War (WW I)
Duchamp's "readymades" / "found objects" / "altered readymades"

André Breton's *First Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924)
Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog), a 1929 Surrealist film by Dalí & Luis Buñuel
"exquisite corpse"
Dalí's "paranoiac-critical method"
Dalí's dream sequence in the Hitchcock film *Spellbound* (1945)
Dalí's contribution to the Disney animation, *Destino* (1945-2003)
visual/verbal puns

Abstract Expressionism, a.k.a. The New York School
Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery in NYC
Pollock's dripped/poured paintings (1947-56); influenced Yves Klein, Janine Antoni, Vik Muñoz.
process vs. product
Broadway play *Red* (2010) by John Logan; inspired by Mark Rothko's life and work
Hans Hofmann (influential painter, teacher)
"stain" technique of painting, developed by Helen Frankenthaler

+ NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and A.I. [artificial intelligence]-generated images

MAJOR ARTWORKS DISCUSSED:

FAUVISM:

André Derain, *The Turning Road, l'Estaque*, 1906

Henri Matisse, *Open Window, Collioure*, 1905

(+ paintings by Maurice de Vlaminck, Suzanne Valadon, Vanessa Bell, Marguerite Thompson Zorach, and Bob Thompson)

EXPRESSIONISM:

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1915

Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman, Child, and Death* (series of b/w prints), c.1910+

(+ Erich Mendelsohn's 1921 *Einstein Tower*, Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1920], Kurt Jooss's modern-dance piece *The Green Table* [1932], & Neo-Expressionist choreography by Pina Bausch.)

CUBISM:

Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, 1907 [transition to Cubism] and *Violin #1*, 1913 [Synthetic Cubism], + *Three Musicians*, 1921 and *Guernica*, 1937 [Cubist variations]

Georges Braque, *Houses at l'Estaque*, 1908 [Cézannian Cubism], + *Man with Guitar*, 1912 [Analytic Cubism]

(+ personal variations on Cubism by Fernand Léger, plus Cubist sculptures by Picasso, Alexander Archipenko, and Jacques Lipchitz; Cubist architecture by Gerrit Rietveld; Cubist ballet [*Parade*, 1917] by Picasso/Satie/Massine).

"Offshoots" of Cubism developed by myriad international painters, including Umberto Boccioni, Christopher Nevinson, Sonia & Robert Delaunay, Morgan Russell, Piet Mondrian, & Kazimir Malevich.

DADA:

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917

SURREALISM:

Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931

René Magritte, *The Son of Man*, 1964 and *The Treachery of Images* (a.k.a. *The Wind and the Song*), 1929

Remedios Varo, *The Creation of Birds*, 1958

Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, 1944

Meret Oppenheim, *Object* (a.k.a. *Breakfast in Fur*), 1936

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM:

Jackson Pollock, *The She-Wolf*, 1943, plus *Convergence*, 1952

Willem de Kooning, *Woman I*, 1952

Franz Kline, *Mahoning*, 1956

Mark Rothko, *Rust and Blue*, 1953

Lee Krasner, *Blue Painting*, 1946

Elaine de Kooning, *Sunday Afternoon*, 1957

Joan Mitchell, *Ladybug*, 1957

Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea*, 1952

(+ Abstract Expressionist sculpture by Ibram Lassaw, Herbert Ferber, and others.)

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