A Visual History of the Visual Arts

Part 2: From Abstract Art to Conceptual Art

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The Space Age

MOMA Flowchart for “Cubism and Abstract Art” (1936)
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• Painting
  – Abstract Expressionism
    • The center of mass of modernism shifts from Paris to New York
    • New York imports cubism (abstraction) and surrealism (automatism), which create the dialectic between the conscious (geometric shapes) and unconscious (spontaneous expression)
    • Alienation of humans from the technological world causes angst (while European abstract painters marvel and rejoice)
    • Little abstract expressionism in sculpture
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• Painting
  – Abstract Expressionism/Action Painting
    • Hans Hofmann (1880, Germany)
    • Arshile Gorky (1905, Armenia)
    • Wilhelm de Kooning (1904, Holland)
    • Jackson Pollock (1912, USA)
    • Adolph Gottlieb (1903, USA)
    • Robert Motherwell (1915, USA)
    • Joan Mitchell (1926, USA)
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- Abstract Expressionism
  - Arshile Gorky
  - Automatism but grounded in autobiography

“Garden in Sochi” series (1940-41)
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• Abstract Expressionism
  – Jackson Pollock
  • The subconscious
  • Jung’s influence

“Male and Female” (1942)

“Lavender Mist” (1950)
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- Abstract Expressionism
  - Jackson Pollock
    - Action painting
    - Holistic
    - Non-referential

“Autumn Rhythm” (1950)

“Blue Poles” (1952)
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• Abstract Expressionism
  – Wilhelm de Kooning
  • More cubist than surrealist

“Excavation” (1950)

“Attic” (1949)
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- Abstract Expressionism
  - Wilhelm de Kooning
- And even expressionist
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- Abstract Expressionism/ Europe (Art Informel)
  - Reaction to cubism
  - Tachisme in France (1951)
  - COBRA (1948): Copenhagen (Co), Brussels (Br), Amsterdam (A)
  - Gutai in Japan (1954)

Pierre Soulages (1919)

Georges Mathieu (1921)
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• Abstract Expressionism/ Europe (Art Informel)
  – Shozo Shimamoto (1928, Japan) throws bottles of paint at canvases
  – Kazuo Shiraga (1924, Japan) paints with his feet
  – Yves Klein (1928, France) uses women's nude bodies as paintbrushes for his "anthropommetries"
  – Shigeko Kubota (1937, Japan) squats over a canvas to create "Vagina Painting" (1965)

This is a chapter in piero scaruffi’s “A Visual History of the Visual Arts”: http://www.scaruffi.com/art/history