

 SCHOLASTIC

# ART<sup>®</sup>

# Helen Frankenthaler

## *Working With Abstraction*

MARCH 2006

Vol. 36 No. 5 ISSN 1060-832X

Published in cooperation with the National Gallery of Art.

[WWW.SCHOLASTIC.COM](http://WWW.SCHOLASTIC.COM)



SCHOLASTIC  
**ART**



**COVER:** Helen Frankenthaler, b. 1928. *Small's Paradise*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 93 5/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. Gift of George L. Erion. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic Inc., 1895-1982

**FOR THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART**

Director EARL A. POWELL III  
Chair, Division of Education LYNN PIERSON RUSSELL

**FOR SCHOLASTIC INC.**

President, CEO,  
Chairman of the Board RICHARD ROBINSON  
Editor MARGARET HOWLETT  
Art Director DEBORAH DINGER  
Photo Editor LINDA PATTERSON EGER  
Contributing Editors PRIYA BHATNAGAR  
SUZANNE BILYEU  
JENNIFER DIGNAN  
DENISE WILLI  
Production Editor ALLAN MOLHO  
Copy Chief RENEE GLASER  
Education Group President MARGERY MAYER  
VP, General Manager, Read To Learn GREG WORRELL  
VP, Editor in Chief, Classroom mags REBECCA BONDOR  
Design Director, Classroom mags JUDITH CHRIST-LAFOND  
Exec. Dir. of Photography STEVEN DIAMOND  
Executive Production Director BARBARA SCHWARTZ  
Director, Manuf. & Distribution MIMI ESGUERRA  
Editorial Systems Director DAVID HENDRICKSON

VP, Marketing JOCELYN FORMAN  
Marketing Manager ALLICIA CLARK

**SCHOLASTIC ART ADVISORY BOARD:**

Lana Beverlin, Trenton High School, Trenton, Missouri • Carol Little, Charles F. Patton Middle School, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania • Lydia Narkiewicz, Pioneer High School, Whittier, California • Sue Rothermel, Wynford Middle School, Bucyrus, Ohio

**POSTAL INFORMATION**

Scholastic Art® (ISSN 1060-832X; in Canada, 2-c no. 55867) is published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov., Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc. Office of Publication: 2931 E. McCarty Street, P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City, MO 65101 and at additional offices. Postmasters: Send notice of address changes to SCHOLASTIC ART, 2931 East McCarty St., P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710.

**PUBLISHING INFORMATION**

U.S. prices: \$8.95 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$19.95 student, \$34.95 Teacher's Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$5.50 student, \$6.50 Teacher's. (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian office, address below.) Subscription communications should be addressed to SCHOLASTIC ART, Scholastic Inc., 333 Randall Rd., Suite 130, St. Charles, IL 60174 or by calling 1-800-387-1437 ext 99. Communications relating to editorial matter should be addressed to Margaret Howlett, SCHOLASTIC ART, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999. Art@Scholastic.com. Canadian address: Scholastic Canada Ltd., 175 Hillmount Rd., Markham, Ontario L6C 1Z7. Canada Customer Service: 1-888-752-4690 Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Material in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher.

SCHOLASTIC, SCHOLASTIC ART, and associated designs are trademarks/registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

Printed in U.S.A.

# Landscapes of the Mind



© Christopher Felver/Corbis.

"I WANTED TO MAKE A TOTALLY ABSTRACT 'MEMORY' OF THE LANDSCAPE."

—HELEN FRANKENTHALER



◀ In this early, somewhat realistic landscape, Frankenthaler uses thick brushstrokes to break her composition into solid, flat, simplified shapes.

*Summer Scene, Provincetown, 1950.* Oil on canvas, 16 1/4 x 20 1/4 in. Portland Art Museum, Oregon. The Clement Greenberg Collection; museum purchase with funds provided by Tom and Gretchen Holce. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

▼ Only its title suggests the subject of this abstract image made up of linear swirls, drips, and swooping curves.

*Great Meadows, 1951.* Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.





**W**hat do you make of the three paintings shown here? Look at the highly abstracted image, bottom left. Can you find a tan sun and a field surrounded by green trees? Why would an artist paint scenes that look like this? And, what makes these images great works of art?

When the creator of these *abstractions*—contemporary American artist Helen Frankenthaler—began her career in the early 1950s, the art world was dominated by a radical group of New York painters known as *Abstract Expressionists*. These artists were not interested in realism. They wanted to express their feelings through color and non-representational shapes. And the star of this art movement was a dynamic rebel named Jackson Pollock. Pollock had a very unconventional painting technique. He would put his huge canvases on the floor, and then drip, pour, and splatter layers of paint on them. Pollock’s influence can be seen in the **spontaneous, overlapping lines and transparent washes** of Frankenthaler’s early abstraction, *Great Meadows* (left).

One October day in 1952, Frankenthaler returned to her New York studio after spending the summer painting watercolors of the sea and the rocky Canadian coast. Spying one of her enormous rolls of canvas in the corner, she spread it out on the floor. Since she was used to painting with water-

color washes, she diluted her oil paints with turpentine. Working like Pollock, she poured the thin mixture onto the unprimed canvas, where the colors soaked right in.

Moving quickly, she laid down a **warm pink center** and surrounded it with **cool green and ochre tints**. Then, with large brushes and light washes, she filled the picture—*Mountains and Sea* (above)—with large, **organic (curved), linear** gestures. All these **positive shapes** seem to float in the center of the composition. This central core is **framed** by the **white negative space** of the canvas, and seems to be **balanced** on the green disc at the bottom. The **horizontal band** of bright blue “sea” to the right links this central unit to the picture’s edge. The suggestion of sea and horizon line turns this abstraction into an imaginary landscape.

Frankenthaler completed *Mountains and Sea* in a single day. The style she developed while creating this work would make her famous, and define her career for the next half century.

**▲ “No one has ever commented on the painting’s title, but you find just this juxtaposition of mountains and sea in very few places.” —Helen Frankenthaler**

*Mountains and Sea*, 1952. Oil on canvas, 86 5/8 x 117 1/4 in. Collection of the artist, on extended loan to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

# A Life in Paint

"EVERY CANVAS IS A JOURNEY  
ALL ITS OWN."

—HELEN FRANKENTHALER



▲ Frankenthaler had just gotten married when she painted this impulsive abstraction.

*Two Live as One on a Crocodile Isle*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 82 x 55 in. Private collection. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

► "For me, paintings, no matter how abstract, usually work or don't work in terms of landscape pictures."  
—Helen Frankenthaler

*The Bay*, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 80 3/4 x 81 3/4 in. The Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Hilbert H. DeLawter. Photo courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.



**B**orn in New York City in 1928, Helen Frankenthaler was the daughter of a State Supreme Court Justice. She graduated from Bennington College in Vermont, then moved back to New York City, the center of the art world in the early 1950s. There she met many of the most important artists of the time such as Willem de Kooning, David Smith, Jackson Pollock, and Robert Motherwell. The young artist was soon recognized as a talented new member of this group, the Abstract Expressionists.

Abstract Expressionism was the first major art movement to emerge after World War II (1939–1945). Before the war, Europe had been the center of the art world. But the world had changed. And by the 1950s, American artists were creating powerful and unconventional new images to express these changes. Abstract painters like Frankenthaler and Pollock believed that only non-representational images would allow them to directly communicate their feelings. They felt that the intensity of their emotions and the physical energy of creation would inspire the viewer to respond directly to the **formal elements** in their compositions such as **line, shape, color, space, balance, and rhythm**.

When you first look at one of Frankenthaler's paintings, it may seem to be completely nonrepresentational. However,

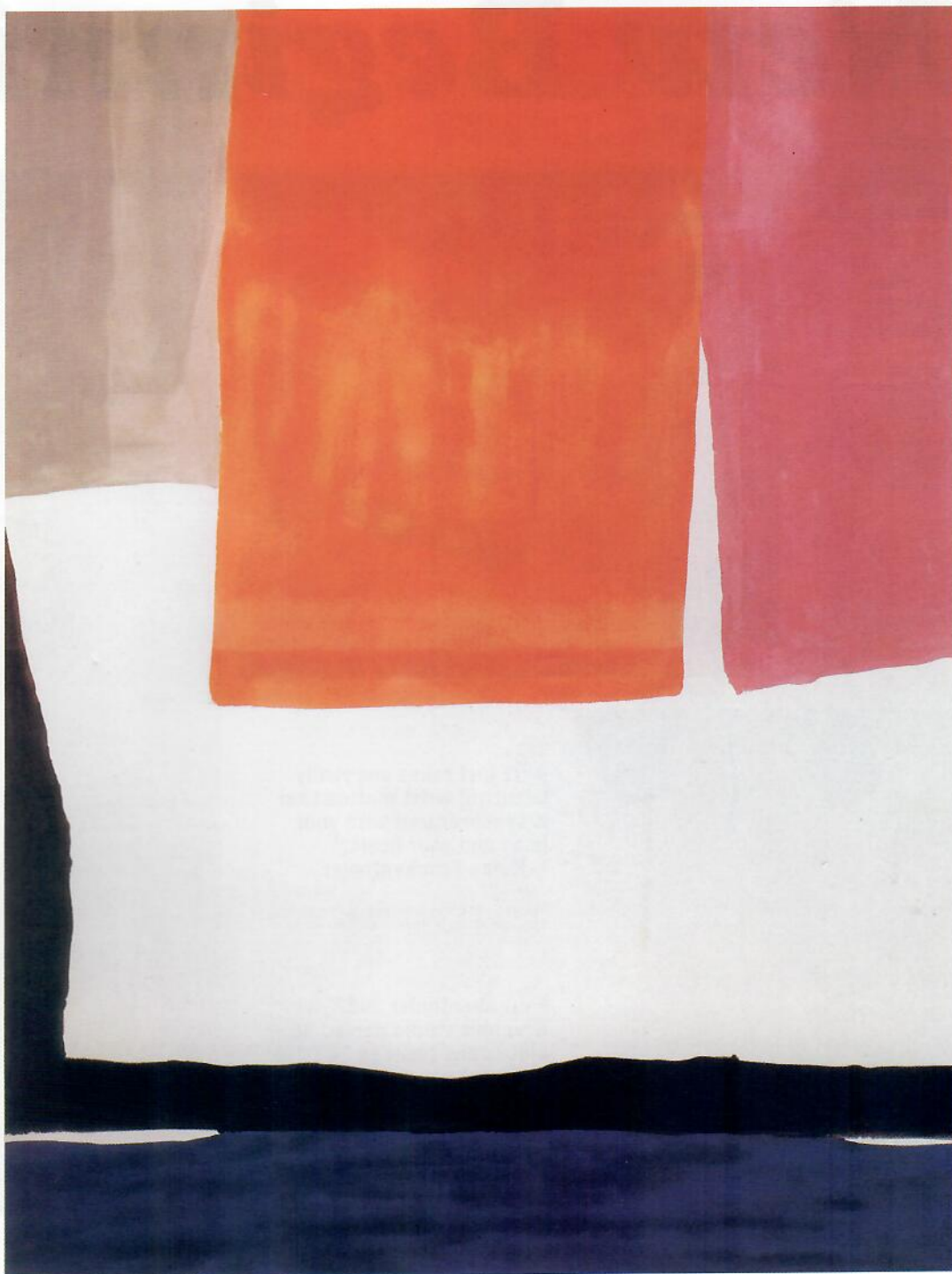
the artist's images are nearly always inspired by nature, her feelings, or some aspect of her life. *Two Live as One on a Crocodile Isle* (top, left) was painted in 1959, a year after she married painter Robert Motherwell. The two **rhythmic brushstrokes**—or "figures"—the **related colors** (red and purple), the somewhat **symmetrical composition**, the **luminous interior space** of the canvas, and the lighthearted title all suggest Frankenthaler's positive state of mind.

In the early 1960s, the two artists began spending their summers on Cape Cod. Frankenthaler used water-based acrylic paints to capture the sensations of light, water, and sand that surrounded her. In *The Bay* (bottom, left), the

radiant, **related** (blue and green), **bleeding colors** seem to reduce nature to its essence, creating the impression of a summer landscape.

As the 1960s came to an end, a new art movement called *Minimalism* was gaining critical attention. Minimalist painters favored geometric shapes and reduced their completely abstract canvases to as few colors as possible. Frankenthaler's work also became simpler and more geometric. The **symmetry** of its composition and the **geometric** quality of the painting on the cover, *Small's Paradise*, give it a sense of power and mystery. The title refers to a New York City nightclub that was a favorite of many artists and writers of the time. But the **intense hues** and **encapsulated** (shapes within shapes) **squares** that make up this work could also suggest an enclosed garden. A complementary green wall **frames** the **related** red, pink, and purple hues that make up this abstract garden of paradise. Even more "minimalist" is Frankenthaler's *The Human Edge* (above). The **negative**, white interior seems to be covered by two banner-like rectangular shapes in this severe, **geometric, hard-edged**, non-representational work.

The artist was once again inspired by natural images



when she created *Flood* (see pages 8–9). In this enormous work, multiple waves of **blurred, dissolving** pinks, reds, and oranges appear to flow over the canvas. These rising layers of **warm, related color tints** seem about to wash over the **cool, complementary** blues and greens at the edge of the frame.

▲“Some days, the horizon line disappears completely, and you get a glow of pink and gray. The sky seems to fall into the water.”

—Helen Frankenthaler

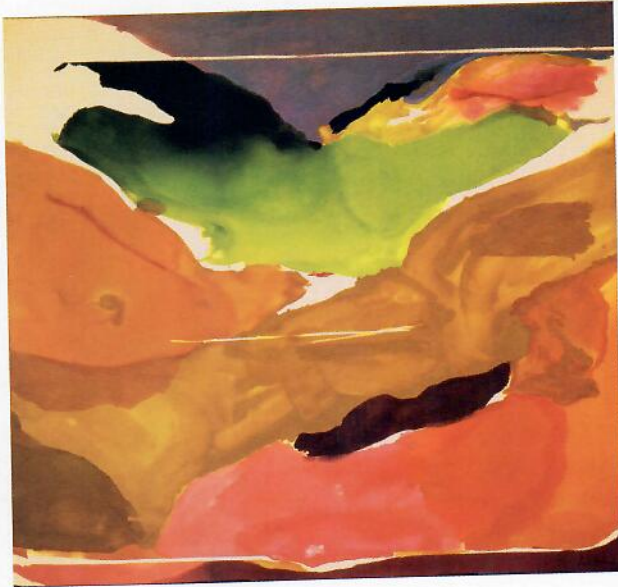
*The Human Edge*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 124 x 91 1/4 in. Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. Museum purchase to honor Max W. Sullivan. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

# New Beginnings

► “The canvas surface is flat, and yet the space extends for miles.”

—Helen Frankenthaler

*Nature Abhors a Vacuum*, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 103 1/2 x 112 1/2 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Patrons' Permanent Fund and gift of Audrey and David Mirvish. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.



◀ “It just takes one really beautiful wrist motion that is synchronized with your head and your heart.”

—Helen Frankenthaler

*Rapunzel*, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 108 x 81 in. Private collection. © Helen Frankenthaler 2006.

► Frankenthaler and Tyler Graphics studio carved 46 blocks and blended 102 different colors to create this huge three-panel woodblock print.

*Madame Butterfly*, 2002. Woodcut print, triptych, edition of 33, 41 3/4 x 79 1/2 in. Published by Tyler Graphics Ltd. © Helen Frankenthaler/Tyler Graphics Ltd. 2006.

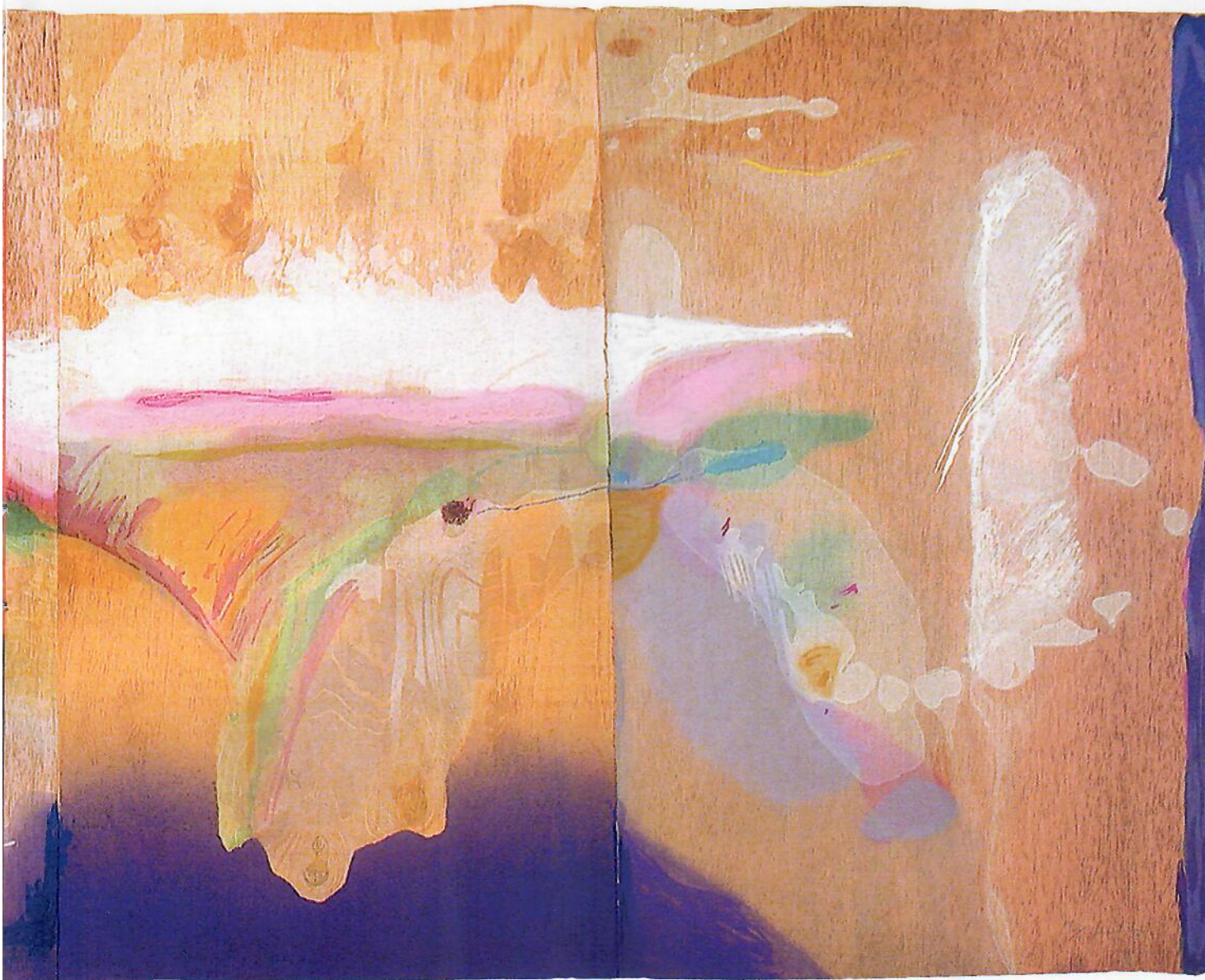
**H**elen Frankenthaler was considered an art star from the moment she created *Mountains and Sea*. But for many years, she was more admired for the innovative “soak stain” technique she developed than for the quality of her work. During the 1950s, the art world was dominated by male artists. In fact, Frankenthaler was one of the only female Abstract Expressionists. In 1970, *Time* magazine, in a review of her work, stated that, “it comes as something of a discovery to learn that Helen can really paint.”

In the 1970s, after separating from Motherwell, Frankenthaler began exploring new materials and methods of

expression. She created her first steel sculptures. Paintings like *Nature Abhors a Vacuum* (top, left), became even more colorful. The **straight lines** she used in her sculptures began to appear in works like this one. Here, thin, **negative white spaces** separate **large, organic shapes of color**, further emphasizing the brilliance of the **blended hues**.

Subjects other than nature inspired some later paintings, such as *Rapunzel* (bottom, left). This work's title refers to a folk tale in which a princess imprisoned in a tower uses her long, golden braids as a ladder. The dabs of color and the long, slightly **diagonal line** that “hangs” from the top of this

"THERE IS NO 'ALWAYS,' NO FORMULA, NO RULES. YOU HAVE TO LET THE PICTURE LEAD YOU WHERE IT MUST GO." —HELEN FRANKENTHALER



asymmetrical composition are visually balanced by the flat, yellow, negative space that fills the bottom.

Now recognized as one of the most important abstract painters of the 20th century, Frankenthaler continues to grow artistically. She has created ceramics and books, and has designed theatrical sets. But her most unusual creations are the unique woodcut prints she currently produces. Woodcut prints are made by carving a design into a block of wood, inking it, then pressing it on paper to print it. Frankenthaler wanted to communicate, in this relatively rigid medium, the same sense of mystery and color as she does in her paintings.

To create the complex woodcut print *Madame Butterfly* (above), Frankenthaler worked closely with a graphic studio. The artist and woodcut technician spent hours “carving” the blocks, using items such as sandpaper and dental tools. They then printed the three panels on wet paper to force the inks to blend together. *Madame Butterfly* is the title of an opera. Through her abstract imagery and use of **blended, related color tints** (light blues, pinks, and purples), Frankenthaler creates the feeling of a theatrical stage. The white central shape suggests the wings of a butterfly, while the delicate patterns resemble webs or natural textures.

SCHOLASTIC

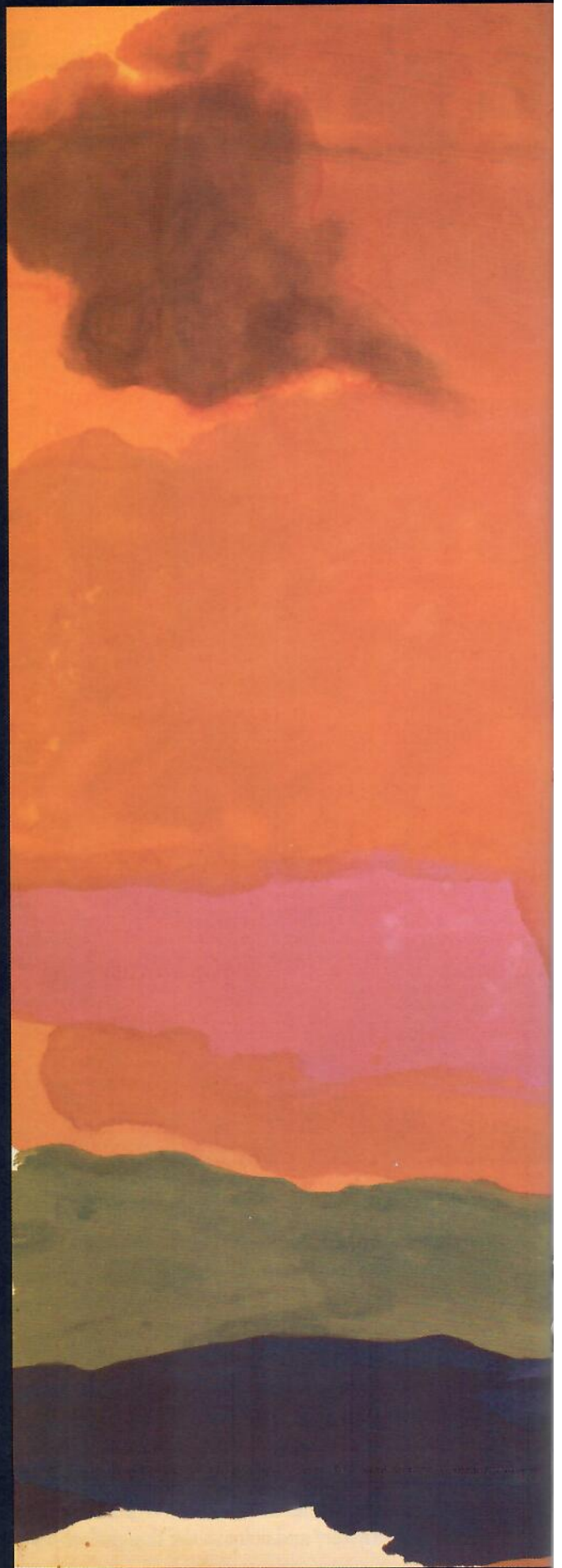
ART

MASTERPIECE  
OF THE MONTH #5

# Flood

by Helen  
Frankenthaler

"YOU HAVE TO KNOW  
HOW TO USE THE ACCIDENT,  
HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT,  
HOW TO CONTROL IT, AND WAYS  
TO ELIMINATE IT, SO THAT THE  
WHOLE SURFACE LOOKS FELT  
AND BORN ALL AT ONCE."  
—HELEN FRANKENTHALER







# Nature Abstracted

THREE CONTEMPORARY ABSTRACTIONISTS  
REINVENT NATURE



**“I TRY TO PAINT THE ESSENCE OF NATURE, SO MANY OF MY SO-CALLED LANDSCAPES SEEM VERY ABSTRACT.” —RICHARD MAYHEW**

▲ Richard Mayhew, b. 1924.  
*Serenity*, 2004. Oil on canvas,  
30 x 40 in. Collection of Grant Hill.  
Photo courtesy of Parish Gallery,  
Washington, D.C.

## NATURE AT EYE LEVEL

**C**ontemporary African-American abstract expressionist painter Richard Mayhew is not interested in depicting nature realistically. Like Frankenthaler, Mayhew wants to express personal feelings and impressions inspired by the natural environment. The painting above, titled *Serenity*, clearly resembles a landscape. The composition is divided in half, the top half a **luminous, warm** (warm colors are red, yellow, orange), **graduated** reddish orange. Orange's **complementary** (opposite) **color pair**—blue—fills the bottom half. The **tints** (lighter) and **shades** (darker) capture and intensify the quality of the light. The **thick brushstrokes**, **layered colors**, and **blurred outlines** create a fleeting impression of nature.



**“IT IS ONLY BY SELECTION, BY ELIMINATION, BY EMPHASIS, THAT WE GET AT THE REAL MEANING OF THINGS.” —GEORGIA O’KEEFFE**

## NATURAL CLOSE-UPS

**T**wentieth-century American artist Georgia O’Keeffe’s fresh perspective on scale and space can be seen in her 1924 painting *Petunias and Coleus* (left). Here, O’Keeffe applies the same techniques a photographer might use when framing an image in the camera’s viewfinder—**close-ups** and **tight cropping**—to transform a natural object into a bold **abstraction**. **Cool, complementary tints** and the **contrast** between the deep purples of the coleus and the pale pink tones of the petunia give the image a dramatic look. **Subtle shading** suggests the lush, velvety **texture** of the petunia petals. Vibrant yellow-green lines form contours that lead the viewer’s gaze toward a central **focal point** inside the blossom. Simplifying the forms of her subjects, O’Keeffe showed their essential substance. By exaggerating the **scale** (size) of an image (this canvas, for instance, is three feet tall), she could make a simple, **organic** (curved) form like a flower, seashell, or bleached animal bone seem almost monumental, transforming it into a world to be explored.

▲ Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986). *Petunias and Coleus*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 in. Private collection. © 2006 The Georgia O’Keeffe Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

**“THE UNIVERSE IS REAL BUT YOU CAN’T SEE IT. YOU HAVE TO IMAGINE IT.” —ALEXANDER CALDER**

## BIRD’S-EYE VIEW

**S**ome artists, like O’Keeffe, create their abstractions by focusing on a single natural detail, while others—such as modern American sculptor Alexander Calder—**simplify** nature to its essence. At first, Calder’s work seems completely non-representational. But most of his sculptures, and prints like *Contour Plowing* (right), have been inspired by some aspect of the natural world. In this abstract work, the viewer sees the formal elements first—the **thick, black, hard-edged lines**, the **flat, bright, primary colors**, and the **simplified, organic shapes**. It is only after reading the title that the **negative/positive, concentric circular lines** take on the additional meaning of plowed fields as seen from the air.



▲ Alexander Calder (1898–1976). *Contour Plowing*, 1974. Gouache on paper, 29 1/4 x 43 1/8 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © 2006 Estate of Alexander Calder / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

# Abstracting Reality

**K**ristin Carver rarely creates realistic art. Instead, 17-year-old Kristin prefers to let her imagination run wild. “I love to play around and see how I can take an object and present it in an abstract way—not what it is, but what it can be,” Kristin says. In this award-winning drawing, Kristin focuses in on five crumbling bricks to suggest an old brick wall.

A senior at Mayfield (Ohio) High School, Kristin has already been accepted into nearby Bowling Green University’s highly regarded graphic arts program. Although undecided about where she’ll attend college, Kristin is certain she wants to work in graphic design. Her dream is to follow in her mother’s footsteps and become an art director at an ad agency someday. “Last year I visited her old office and just fell in love with the career,” she says. “I knew it was exactly what I wanted to do: be in a place where I could put my ideas on paper, see them evolve, and put to work. Creating art is so liberating and invigorating. I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

## How did you first get involved in art?

My mom inspired me. Growing up, I’d always see her sketching out her ideas or designing things on the computer. Art became my favorite thing to do. I constantly doodled as a child. In elementary school, I’d take control of any art project.

## How did you think up this award-winning piece?

We were studying modern art and our teacher gave us the assignment to create an abstract composition. She wanted us to focus on something out of the ordinary, something that doesn’t look exactly like it really is. We were given cameras and told to go outside and take pictures of whatever we wanted from different perspectives. I’m constantly taking pictures in my backyard of things from an unusual point of view. I feel I have a really good eye for zeroing in on a close-up view of an

object that really reflects its essence without showing the object as a whole.

## How did you get your idea?

As I was taking photographs, this patch of brick caught my eye. I loved the crumbledness of it, the balance of the dark shadows created by the crevices and cracks against the lighter tones of mortar and cement, and the colors of the old red brick against the gray. I thought it looked really neat and knew this would be the focus

of my piece. I shot several photos very close up to get the abstract look I was after. I wanted to show just enough bricks so that you could imagine what the rest of the scene looks like. I decided to base my drawing on this shot because I really liked the composition. I drew it true to scale, exactly as I photographed it.

## Why did this composition appeal to you so much?

I liked how it made the crumbled portion of the brick the focal point. Your eye zeroes in on that section near the middle, then works its way around it. When my dad saw this piece, he said the pebbly part looked like a bowl of fruit. He asked me, “Do you see it?” I didn’t really, but that’s what abstract art is all about. You can see whatever you want.

## How did you go about creating this piece?

After I selected the image, I sketched it out in pencil. I outlined the vertical and horizontal bricks, the mortar, and



KRISTIN CARVER

**“When my dad saw this piece, he said the pebbly part looked like a bowl of fruit. I didn’t really [see it], but that’s what abstract art is all about. You can see whatever you want.”**



Kristin Canby, b. 1988. *Crumbled Bricks*, 2005.

some of the important cracks. Then, I started to work on filling in the color and detail with chalk. I chose to work in chalk because it has a powdery, clayish feel, just like brick, and it's a very forgiving medium. You also can blend colors easily with chalk to create a gritty, dirty, washed-out brick effect. I started with big thick chalk and laid down the main blocks of color first in red, white, and gray. Wherever I needed to, I added layers of color and blended them. For example, I blended gray over the red to give the feel of the brick showing through the cement with age.

#### **What did you do next?**

I worked on the details using thinner chalk. I mixed white with brown and orange to give the mortar a dirty, natural

look. I used brown to create pebbles and to make the grout more realistic, and then I added darker shades of antique red and gray for texture on the brick. I also used charcoal pencil to outline and add depth to the crevices, cracks, and shadows. I stepped back, looked at my work, and adjusted small details that I thought were missing until I knew I was done.

#### **What role did color play in your work?**

It played a big role. The beige mortar that frames the right and bottom sides of the piece creates a visual pathway, almost like a road. Your eyes start at the left bottom and follow the "road" up to the first piece of brick. Or they can continue up the road to the focal point at the next left.

#### **What was the biggest challenge for you?**

The time it took to finish it. Because of the details, it took me one month working every day in class. I would go over

each section and redo details until I got them exactly right.

#### **What advice do you have for other young artists?**

Be confident about your abilities. It's easy to get intimidated when you think of how much talent there is in the world. You just need to be confident, be yourself, and don't be afraid to take the next step. I let my imagination lead me as I work. I try new things and I don't worry about what other people think.

To find out more about The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, ask your teacher to write to The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Inc., 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999, phone 212-343-6892, or go to [www.scholastic.com/artandwriting](http://www.scholastic.com/artandwriting).

NINA M. RUMFELT



The **straight horizontals and verticals** as well as the **transparency of the overlapping colors** in Nina's **abstract composition** suggest buildings or a cityscape. The **rough, textured** quality and the **geometric shapes** that make up the image add to this urban feeling.

MITCH J. SMITH



The **tight cropping of the diagonals** that make up Mitch's complex abstract pattern make the design seem to extend beyond the frame. Adding to this feeling of activity are the **contrasting color pairs** (blue/orange, red/green, yellow/purple); the **interlocking, angular shapes**; and the **loose, dynamic brushstrokes**.

DEVON B. FRENCH



Devon has abstracted a recognizable shape and used bright, **primary colors** to create this work. The **asymmetrical composition** (different on each side but visually balanced) con-

## SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP

# Painting Abstract S

## USE COLOR AND SPACE TO CREATE YOUR OWN A

### MATERIALS

- 24 x 36 in., 80-lb. white sulfite paper
- Drawing boards, two per student, or 26 x 38 in. heavy piece of cardboard
- Small containers for tempera paint (can use margarine or yogurt containers)
- Liquid tempera paint (primary, secondary, black, and white)\*
- Container to hold water
- Plastic wrap to cover palette
- Palette (old dinner plate or paper plate)
- Elephant ear sponges
- Cellulose or poly sponges, cut into a variety of sizes
- Paper towels
- Newspapers or plastic bags to sit on
- Masking tape or bulldog clips (to hold paper on boards)

\* 50/50 mixture of Blickcrylic and Dick Blick Student Tempera was used for this assignment; very good color when thinned with water, economical, dries quickly, does not smear, and dries matte. Overpaints very well.

**Y**ou've seen in this issue how Helen Frankenthaler emphasizes the formal elements of design—especially colors, shapes, and space—to create abstract “landscapes” based on some aspect of nature.

To do this project, you can work outside or inside. The subject you choose will serve as inspiration for an interesting, visually balanced, abstract design.

**STEP 1** If you are working outdoors, select a location that will make a visually interesting landscape or cityscape. Look for contrasts of large and small, light and shadow, and dynamic relationships between objects. Choose an interesting point of view. Plan how to transport your materials—drawing boards, paper, paint, palettes, brushes, sponges, water. Dress appropriately for weather conditions.

**STEP 2** Keep in mind that the object of this assignment is to communicate a feeling, impression, or characteristic of the location, not to reproduce a realistic-looking scene. Determine which design elements will best express what you are seeing and feeling—line, shape, color,



MICHELLE BOS



NINA M. RUMFELT



trasts **organic** and **geometric shapes**. The **flat primary colors** (red, blue, and yellow) and **simplified, hard-edged shapes** add to the visual power of this painting.

Michelle has reduced her composition to a single flat shape and two **related colors** (red and purple). The **organic curves** of the **positive purple shape** echo and **repeat** those in the **negative red background**. The two **parallel diagonal lines** in the center, squeezed from a paint tube, add **texture** to the work as well as suggest a kind of horizon line.

The "natural" colors and suggestion of clouds and horizon cause Nina's nearly **symmetrical** (same on both sides) work to seem a little more realistic than the others. The **tints** (light color) and **shades** (dark color) in the stained pools of paint contrast with the **flat brown** area below.

# scenes

## ABSTRACTION

space, or texture? Look for objects with interesting patterns, as well as contrasting or repeating shapes, sizes, and angles. You can take elements from one section and relocate them to improve your composition. The colors you choose can reflect local color, or colors not found in nature can be used expressively to set a mood.

**STEP 3** Set up drawing boards and organize your work area so materials are easily accessible. You may wish to put your paper directly on the grass or pavement when working. Mix paint with water to a consistency that will work for stain painting (it should resemble 2% milk). Adding more water increases the transparency. Use your entire arm and shoulder while painting to give brushstrokes power and spontaneity. Let colors dry before overpainting. Rich color combinations can be made by overlapping areas of paint.



### SOME HELPFUL HINTS

**TO BEGIN:** You can work outdoors, letting the landscape or the school grounds serve as the basis for your abstract painting. Organize your work area so materials are easily accessible.



**OR:** You can select visually interesting objects, set up a still life, and work inside.

**REMEMBER:** You can manipulate the sponge using by using its corners, edges, and flat surfaces to achieve different kinds of marks. Each type of sponge will handle differently and produce different results.



# Abstract Images

EXACTLY HOW ARE ABSTRACT ARTISTS ABLE TO INVOLVE VIEWERS IN THEIR NON-REPRESENTATIONAL WORKS OF ART?

**A**bstract artists such as Helen Frankenthaler use a number of techniques to create their non-representational paintings.

Here are details of some of the works featured in the magazine and a list of terms, titles, artist's names, and descriptions associated with them. Next to each word or phrase, write the letter of the image (or images) that seems most appropriate.



- |                             |                                 |                               |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Diagonal line        | ___ 8. <i>Mountains and Sea</i> | ___ 15. Rhythmic brushstrokes |
| ___ 2. Helen Frankenthaler  | ___ 9. Alexander Calder         | ___ 16. Triptych              |
| ___ 3. Three primary colors | ___ 10. Butterfly wings         | ___ 17. Related colors        |
| ___ 4. Woodcut print        | ___ 11. Realistic               | ___ 18. Negative space        |
| ___ 5. Complementary colors | ___ 12. Geometric shapes        | ___ 19. <i>Rapunzel</i>       |
| ___ 6. Tightly cropped      | ___ 13. "Soak stain" technique  | ___ 20. Georgia O'Keeffe      |
| ___ 7. Minimalist           | ___ 14. Richard Mayhew          | ___ 21. Color tints           |