# Abstract Expressionism



**Michael Gallagher,** *The Wildness of Flowers*

## Abstract Expressionism: Blending Inspiration with Spontaneity

Abstract expressionism (1940s to 1950s) was the first art movement with joint American and European roots. The movement's origins come from the post impressionists, including Vincent van Gogh, to the abstraction of Wassily Kandinsky to the subconscious renderings of surrealist artists including Joan Miro.

Abstract expressionism is an intense, deliberate methodical process where creativity begins with inspiration and develops spontaneously or over time. The artist makes art through a series of conscious or subconscious techniques,

conveying emotion, thought or message through means other than traditional methods such as still life, portraiture, or landscape.

The artist's challenge is to provide abstract artwork that is powerful enough to move or evoke an emotion from the viewer, rather than provide a clear image. Ideally, the viewer actually enters and becomes one with the art piece. When this occurs, the work moves the viewer's emotions to an engaging, personal interaction, culminating in a riveting attachment and artistic growth.

In well-made abstract art, emotional expression intersects harmoniously with intensive technical processes, resulting in pure satisfaction and evoking strong feelings in the viewer.

Masterful abstract art is the successful blending of a high degree of technical knowledge and precision application with chemist-like qualities, while maintaining liberal freedom of personal expression and inspiration. Size, color, shape, form, line, texture, shading, balance, brush strokes, medium and assemblage all contribute to the work; while a strong painterly sense of color, balance, depth, and technique are also crucial for the creation of lasting abstract artwork.

Abstract expressionism includes partial abstraction in the works of cubist Pablo Picasso - who alters and distorts figures from real life - to Jean-Michel Basquiat with boldly aggressive monster-like, dream-state (other worldly) and graffiti street art influenced paintings. Additionally to figurative; landscapes, cityscapes, seascapes, representational, and nonrepresentational work can be abstracted as well.

**Pure Abstraction Masters Include**

**Jackson Pollock** with all over drip paintings, evoking beautiful harmonious rhythm

**Mark Rothko** with specific placement, sizing and choice of color blocking

**Barnett Newman** with a more strict and defined style

Hard-edge painter **Frank Stella** who worked with precision geometrics and shaped canvases

**Piet Mondrian** with primarily black horizontal and vertical line grids and color placements against white backgrounds

**Franz Kline** and **Robert Motherwell** using predominately black and white color with very broad and bold stroked canvases

**Willem de Kooning's** softer color palette and ribbon-like airy form feeling later

career paintings

**Cy Twombly** with very deliberately controlled scratches and scribbles

Pure minimalist abstract artists such as sculptors **Richard Serra** who works interactive steel installations of massive scale and **Tony Smith** who allows monochromatic color and shape to define and evoke emotion through abstract art.

Abstract expressionism follows the natural progression of modern and contemporary architects such as **Frank Lloyd Wright, Joseph Eichler,** father-son team **George and Robert Alexander,** and **Frank Gehry.** These architects' venues provide spaces to properly and appropriately show the abstract work. These venues include homes, churches, high rise buildings, offices, fire stations, libraries, city halls, court houses, community centers, banks, hospitals, museums, galleries, performing arts complexes and retail spaces.

Roberta Carasso, Ph D, art critic and curator adds, "Working abstractly often begins with exploration of aesthetic concepts. An abstract artist seeks to discover how space works, and how color can expand the space; or how linear configurations change the dynamics. Inspiration is a strong desire to explore visual concepts. How can I make color recede, or color come forward? How is this color palette in keeping with what I am trying to accomplish?"