

4B: Observe & Analyze II

Jennifer Szlag, Language & Communications Instructor [00:00:00] The next painting I'm going to show you guys will be Jackson Pollock's One: Number 31, 1950. Today we'll be discussing the history and the significance of abstract expressionism, an art movement that we addressed in the last reading assignment that brought us up to the 1970s. What was another name for abstract expressionism and the artists involved in that art movement? Yeah?

Student [00:00:25] The New York School.

Jennifer Szlag [00:00:26] Good. Exactly. So abstract expressionism was also known as the New York School.

Jennifer Szlag [00:00:36] So the New York School included a group of artists centered in New York City in the 1940s and the 1950s. You should all be taking notes as I fill this in. Their paintings were often large scale and sometimes were made by dripping, pouring, and splattering paint. Critics referred to Jackson Pollock as Jack the Dropper, and his method of painting was described as action painting. So abstract expressionism was the first specifically American art movement to achieve worldwide recognition and placing New York City at the center of the art world. It was a position that was previously occupied by Paris in the 1930s. So art moved. It moved from Paris to New York City in the 1950s. Can anyone tell me what the catalyst was for this art movement? Anyone? Morgan?

Morgan, Student [00:01:41] Well, at the end of World War II, the artists of that time were horrified by the brutality of the war.

Jennifer Szlag [00:01:47] Exactly. That's right. So 1945, it marks the end of World War II.

Jennifer Szlag [00:02:02] But the war wasn't the only influencing factor. Jackson Pollock, he also had a passion for jazz music and the link between the music and his poured paintings has been noted by many writers. Pollack said, "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about."

Jennifer Szlag [00:02:23] The 1950s were a big movement in jazz. Artists like Miles Davis and John Coltrane, even Dizzy Gillespie. These were some big jazz artists at the time in the 1950s. They started a movement called Bebop. It was an entirely new style of music in the 1950s and we're going to take a listen now. We're going to listen to some bebop music while we look at Jackson Pollock.

Jennifer Szlag [00:03:19] So, where can you see a connection between abstract expressionism and the movement, in the jazz movement, specifically? Anyone? Yeah, Liv.

Liv, Student [00:03:30] It's clear that both were radically different than what was going on in the 1930s.

Jennifer Szlag [00:03:35] That's right. Can you expand a little bit on the 1930s? Tell me a little bit how they were different.

Liv, Student [00:03:39] Well, these artists and musicians were more improvisational and less concerned with rules.

Jennifer Szlag [00:03:46] So less rules, more improvisationally based music, right? As well as the painting. We saw Jackson Pollock taking a canvas and throwing it on the ground and pouring paint on it. Same with the movement of jazz. So we've connected music and art with cultural and political events of the 1940s and the 1950s. For your assignment, I want you to use your reading to continue this process, noting how music, art, and culture influenced each other right up until the 1970s.

In groups, I'd like you to create a timeline that starts where we left off in the 1950s. I want you to answer the following questions with your timeline. What was the next movement in art and what were the cultural circumstances that influenced it? Include on your timeline the important political and social events. Also include the musicians and artists of the time. I'll be coming around to your groups to answer any questions.

Student [00:04:46] Some of the major events that were going on in the '60s were the Civil Rights Movement and the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

Student [00:05:01] Those definitely showed up in the music of the Beatles and Bob Dylan. And Mark Rothko's work in the 1960s reflected a shift towards peace.

Liv, Student [00:05:13] And the big push in consumerism that was going on in the '60s was incorporated into Andy Warhol's work. His first soup can painting was 1962.