Joslyn Art Museum
Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

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1st Semester – Contemporary Artists

Focus: Helen Frankenthaler and Monoscape

Objectives – Students will:
• Learn about the connections between emotion and color.
• Critically consider two contrasting styles of formalism and expressionism as well as the significance of women in art.
• Discover two of Frankenthaler’s techniques: pouring paint and soak-stain, and monoprintmaking.

Common Core Standards available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers (login: teacher / TT4T)

Resources: Check out the Teacher Support Materials online, and http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers for additional resources

Suggested Materials: Frankenthaler teaching poster, canvas, inks, flow aid, acrylic paint, eye droppers, paper (Reves BFK), small bottle gum arabic, watercolor pencils, water based block printing ink, oil or soy-based ink, pencils, markers, oil pastels, papers for drawing, plexiglass, brayers, baren, palette/putty knives, paint brushes, paint palettes, cups (for water), cloth rags, tarlatan, q-tips, mark making tools, small photo tray, rolling pins, disposable gloves, empty spray bottles vegetable oil, baby wipes, objects that make sounds.

Vocabulary: abstract expressionism, Exquisite Corpse, formalism, gradient, soak-stain, mono prints, soundscape

Procedure:
• Engage: Emotion & Color. Show students Frankenthaler’s Monoscape, and tell them to name the colors they see. For each color, ask what it means to them adding these words to the board. You may even want to talk about the symbolism of the colors. For younger students, this is a valuable website: www.mariaclaudiacortes.com

• Art Talk: Women in Art. At a time when male artists dominated the art world, Frankenthaler had a successful career. Have a discussion with students about this. Do they think it helped that she came from a wealthy family? Could it be she was at the right place at the right time?

• History: Who was Helen Frankenthaler, and what is her story? Refer to the teaching poster and additional information in Teacher Support Materials.

• Aesthetics: What do you see? While looking at art from the turn of the century to Frankenthaler’s work, talk about formalism versus expressionism. Frankenthaler’s work was considered “post-painterly abstraction,” term coined by art critic Clement Greenberg. Compare her works with her friend, Jackson Pollock’s, and talk about which artist has more action.

• Production 1: Pouring Paint and Soak-Stain. Refer to the workshop lead by Therese Straseski at the November 2012 Thursdays for Teachers. Turn into a collaborative project where each student gets to mix their own color, and they stain a large canvas.
• **Production 2:** The Felt Image (monoprints). Refer to the workshop lead by Julie Fields-Sopscak at the November 2012 Thursdays for Teachers.

• **Close:** Emotion & Color part 2. Have students gather around the finished collaborative project from production 1 and talk about the colors they see including what they represent.

**Extensions:**

- **Cultural Connections:** Use non-traditional “instruments” to make a soundscape with Monoscape. Refer to John Cage's “Imaginary Landscapes.” Create something artistic using non-musical thing from the time period. Think about using old radios, tvs other things that make a sound to create a beat / song.

- **Fine Arts:** Frankenthaler did not like to reuse symbols; she wanted all her artworks to be different. Give students ten pieces of paper, and using typical art media, they need to create ten different squares. Consider following in Frankenthaler's steps by using non-painterly tools.

- **Language Arts:** Have students play a fun game, Exquisite Corpse, which the Abstract Expressionism artists would play at parties. Follow link for rules: [http://goo.gl/3FRRC](http://goo.gl/3FRRC)

- **Math:** Explain how to estimate percentages. Define the colors and then estimate the amount each color covers in percentages, fractions, and decimals. Students should explain and model how by using printed copy that they came up with for the fractions for each color.

- **Science 1:** Have students create a journal for earth science. They should look at Monoscape then sketch it out in their journal and label it as an illustration (i.e. mountains, snow, magma)

- **Science 2:** Explore the gradient of colors by taking glasses of water and food coloring to change them. This could also be a way to create inks for pouring paint production project.