

# GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

## Online Art Courses: *Abstraction and Painting Since World War II*

### CONTENTS

The course will be divided into four thematic modules, with examples by relevant artists.

#### **Module I: Abstract Expressionism: The Success of American Painting**

In the mid-1940s, a new trend in modern art began to take shape in New York, around galleries like Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century and art critics like Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. The movement, known as Abstract Expressionism, was typically American, transforming the pictorial space into an open field – a canvas in which there were no limits, where the creative process was structured by the artist's personality and scale.

**Video 1:** The beginnings of abstract painting, from Wassily Kandinsky and Hilma af Klint to the historical avant-garde

**Video 2:** Action painting in America: Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning

**Video 3:** Color field in America: Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman

**Video 4:** Other sensitivities: Arshile Gorky, Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell (the second generation)

#### **Module II: Form in Europe after the War: Art Informel**

In Europe, under the influence of existentialism and the traumatic effects of World War II, a new generation of artists broke away from Surrealism and its tenets, as well as from the utopias and experimental ideas pursued by the historical avant-garde. This led to the emergence of a new pictorial language in which improvisation and the spontaneity of the gesture, the expressive use of materials, the focus on technique, and chance took center stage.

**Video 1:** Art Brut (outsider art) and Art Autre (other art)

**Video 2:** Gesture, matter, stain: Tachisme

**Video 3:** An art group: CoBrA

**Video 4:** Art Informel in Spain: El Paso and Cuenca 1966 – “The Most Beautiful Small Museum in the World”

#### **Module III: Back to Geometric Abstraction**

In the late 1950s, a new trend emerged in American painting: Hard Edge. The term was coined to describe the work of several artists influenced by color field painting, who adopted a knowingly impersonal paint application and delineated areas of color with particular sharpness and clarity. Eventually, it evolved into post-painterly abstraction, incorporating optical illusions and lyrical elements. This trend was joined by Conceptualism and Minimalism in the 1960s, embracing simplicity, neat lines, and single-color cold palettes. In the 1980s, Neo-geo, or Neo-

Geometric Conceptualism, proposed a return to geometric abstraction, adapting the visual principles of Minimalism to the new era.

**Video 1:** Hard Edge: Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt

**Video 2:** Post-painterly abstraction: Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella

**Video 3:** Minimalist painting: Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Jo Baer

**Video 4:** Neo-geo (Neo-Geometric Conceptualism): Sean Scully, Peter Halley

#### **Module IV: Artists Defying Classification**

In this final module, we will meet a series of remarkable artists whose work, creativity, or career make it difficult to subsume them under fixed or established categories.

**Video 1:** Bridget Riley, Olivier Mosset, Yayoi Kusama

**Video 2:** Josef Albers, Gerhard Richter

**Video 3:** Sol LeWitt, Julie Mehretu

**Video 4:** Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Katharina Grosse