CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPMENT OF ABSTRACTION IN WESTERN MODERN ART

The history of abstraction in art has many stages and has a complex account of development that evolved over a very long time. It would be very difficult to give any tentative definition of abstraction without taking into account the vast and varied cultural and historical trajectories. Abstract pattern has its roots in ancient history, represented through early decoration for textile and pottery. In various decorative arts such as carpet design, quilting, floor design and pottery, abstract motifs have employed since ancient times in many cultures. In Judaic and Islamic societies have strictures on the use of images in their cultures. That was the reason; they used floral designs and non-representational forms in their varied arts. Tantric Yantras, Tibetan Mandalas, Hindu ritualistic diagrams and designs like Rangoli and Alpana are also some earliest examples of pure abstract designs.

Early intimation of abstraction in Western art had been comes in the painting of William Turner. In 1842 this English landscape painter had painted the ‘Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth’ (Fig. 2.1) in which he tries to capture
the storm in a much different manner. Sea, ship, waves, storm, snow, and clouds in
the painting were depicted in such a manner which can hardly be distinguished from
one another. Turner's intention was not to depict the mere portrayal of the storm on
the canvas. Later he painted the ‘Rain, Steam and Speed ‘ in 1844 and ‘Norham
Castle, Sunrise’ (Fig. 2.2) in 1845 which were really significant example of his
radical simplification of forms.

Later, in 1972 James McNeill Whistler, who was basically a figurative
painter had painted a significant painting named ‘Nocturne in Black and Gold: The
falling Rocket’ (Fig. 2.3) which was the part of a series of atmospheric ‘Nocturnes’.
Whistler paints a night scene in the painting which shows the fireworks at Cremorne
Gardens. In the fabrication of the painting, whistler’s intension was to paint the
visual sensation of a moment rather than to the depiction of form. “Whistler believed
that certain experiences were often best expressed by nuance and implication. These
compositions weren’t designed to avoid the truth of a scene, but instead served as a
means of reaching deeper, more hidden truths.”1 He was highly influenced from the
music in his work. “He also began to re-title many of his earlier works using terms
associated with music, such as a ‘nocturne’, ‘symphony’, ‘harmony’, ‘study’ or
‘arrangement’, to emphasize the tonal qualities and the composition and to de-
emphasize the narrative content.”2

![Fig.2.2. Norham Castle, Sunrise, J.M.W.Turner, 1845.](image1)

![Fig.2.3. Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, J. Whistler, 1874](image2)
Advent of the abstraction in art is connected with the general development of art of the twentieth century. In the beginning of the twentieth century, artists such as Wassily Kandinsky in Munich, Frank Kupka and Robert Delaunay in Paris, and Kasimir Malevich in Moscow, Piet Mondrian in Netherlands had began to dissolve concrete objects, making the transition to the art of painting with autonomous imagery.

2.1. Antecedence of Abstraction in Western Modern Art

Abstraction is different from pattern making in design since it draws a distinction between decorative art and fine art in which a painting is an object of thoughtful contemplation in its own right.

Till the mid-nineteenth century, most of the artists were practicing in realistic painting. They were more concerned with depicting reality, or nature, in a realistic manner. But around 1860 painters began to work against the pre-established classical norms of composition and romantic subject matter. During this time, a movement arose in 1870’s in Europe, called ‘Impressionism’. The Impressionists had shocked the art world with their attempts to give an impression of their subject matter rather than to represent it. Artists became more independent and subjective towards their works of art. Art for the first time did not represent images that were fully recognizable. The Impressionists painters much influenced from the work of the earlier painters like Eugene Delacroix and J. M. W. Turner, who painted from nature, but with much different manner.

Impressionist painters were innovative in their times, as they broke the pre-established norms of academic painting. They had been used fresh colors and bold brush strokes on the canvas. They used the colors in such a manner that diffuse the line or contours in the picture space. “While art had always been to a certain extent abstract in that formal considerations had frequently been of primary importance, painters, beginning with the impressionists in the 1870s, took new delight in use of brushwork. They made random spots of color and encrusted the canvas with strokes that did not always correspond to the object that they were depicting but that formed coherent internal relationships. Thus began a definite separation of the image and the
subject. The impressionists exploited the range of the color spectrum, directly applying strokes of pure pigment to the canvas rather than mixing colors on the palette.”

They also took the act of painting out of the studio. Previously, not only still life and portraits, but also landscapes, had been painted indoors, but the Impressionists were more interested to capture the momentary and transient effects of sunlight in their works. With a strong interest in the effects of light and movement on subject matter, the Impressionists depicted everyday scenery and events. Abandoning the confines of the studio, they painted outdoors at different times of the day in order to capture natural light in its various stages. Focusing on the overall visual effect rather than details, their work was characterized by short, thick brush strokes along with the juxtaposition of pure colour that enabled them to create bold shadows in order to accentuate the true effects of light. “When the Impressionist painters, leaving the studio for the open air, tried to apprehend the object immersed in its natural luminosity, figurative painting began to die. In the canvases of Monet objects dissolve in color washes, and the usual image of things is pulverized between luminous reflections. Fidelity to the natural world is transferred from objectification to impression. Once the contours that had kept objects isolated in space had been broken, all possibility of control of pictorial expression was limited to the internal coherence of the canvas.”

Although impressionistic painters changed the general principles of form and application of colours, but as well as their subjects were related, they were very limited. Many Impressionists painters had ignored the social developments of their society and painted themes such as social gatherings and landscapes. But, they emphasized overall effects rather than details in the painting. They used ‘broken’ brush strokes of pure and unmixed color in the paintings. Their intension was to achieve the effect of intense color vibration.

The Impressionists developed new techniques that were specific to the movement. “Manet and his followers brought about a revolution in the representation of the forms brought about by the Greeks. They discovered that, if we look at nature in the open, we do not see individual objects each with its own color
but rather a bright medley of tones which blend in our eye or in our mind.”

Impressionist’s art was a different way of seeing; it was an art of immediacy and movement; of the play of light expressed in a bright and varied use of color. “Impressionists took advantage of the mid-century introduction of premixed paints in lead tubes which allowed artists to work more spontaneously, both outdoors and indoors.”

The Impressionist painting developed as a reaction by artists to the medium of photography, which can provide the life like images with greater extent of reality. “Initially photography’s presence seemed to undermine the artist’s depiction of nature and their ability to mirror reality. Both portrait and landscape paintings were deemed somewhat deficient and lacking in truth as photography produced lifelike images much more efficiently and reliably. In spite of this, photography actually inspired artists to pursue other means of artistic expression, and rather than competing with photography to emulate reality, artists focused on the one thing they could inevitably do better than the photograph – by further developing into an art form its very subjectivity in the conception of the image, the very subjectivity that photography eliminated.”

Impressionists paint their images with their perception rather than to create the mirror image of the visible world. This thing inspire artist to create what they saw with their “tacit imperatives of taste and conscience.” Photography also encouraged painters to explore varied other aspects of the painting like colour and technique of brush handling etc. “The Impressionists were the first to consciously offer a subjective alternative to the photograph.”

“Painting need to be rescued from competition with camera. This Manet accomplished by insisting that a painted canvas is above all, a material surface covered with pigments – that we must look at it, not through it… The world of painting has natural laws that are distinct from those of familiar reality, and the painter’s first loyalty is to do canvas not to be the outside world. Here begins an attitude that was later summed up in the doctrine of ‘Art for Art sake’ and became a bone of contention between the progressives and conservatives for the rest of the century. Manet himself disdained such controversies but his work assist to his
lifelong devotion to ‘pure painting’ – to the belief that brush strokes and color patches themselves not what they stands for, all the artist primary reality”10 In this context some of his works such as ‘Sunrise’ (Fig. 2.4), ‘Haystack-Sun in the Mist’ (Fig. 2.5), and ‘Water Lilies’ (Fig. 2.6) were really significant.

Fig.2.4. Sunrise, Claude Monet, 1872-73, Watercolour on Paper

Fig.2.5. Haystacks -Sun in the mist, Claude Monet , 1891, Oil on Canvas

Fig.2.6. Water Lilies, Claude Monet, 1906
Impressionism is the first nineteenth century art movement in which expression played a significantly more important role. The impressionists took more liberties with respect to realism, mainly in the use of color.

In the late-19th century, George Seurat created a new style of painting through small dots of colours, which was later, recognized as a Neo-Impressionism. A technique of the Neo-Impressionists, called Pointillism or Divisionism, involves breaking color into its basic elements, by painting in very small and regular dots. From a distance the multiple dots form an optical mixture of color. The best known example is Seurat's ‘Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte’. In this painting, tiny juxtaposed dots of multi-colored paint allow the viewer's eye to blend colors optically, rather than having the colors blended on the canvas or pre-blended as a material pigment.

That was the time, when many scientists were working on colour theory. Among them Chevreul and Charles Blanc were most significant. Chevreul’s contribution was producing the color wheel of primary and intermediary hues. Chevreul was a French chemist who discovered, during his experiments that two colors juxtaposed, slightly overlapping or very close together, would have the effect of another color when seen from a distance. The discovery of this fact became the basis for the Pointillist technique of the Neo-Impressionist painters.

Seurat took seriously, the color theorists' notion of a scientific approach to painting. Seurat believed that a painter could use color to create harmony and emotion in art in the same way that a musician uses variation in sound and tempo to create harmony in music. As he says “Art is Harmony. Harmony is the analogy of the contrary and of similar elements of tone, of color and of line, considered according to their dominance and under the influence of light, in gay, calm or sad combinations”.

Seurat was an Impressionist painter but his intension was to make Impressionism more durable and he went about it very differently. His style was an important in the context of abstraction as he had radically changed the application of colours in the painting “The machine like quality of Seurat’s forms achieved through rigorous abstraction is the first expression of a peculiarly modern outlook leading to
futurism. Seurat’s systematic approach to art has internal logic of modern engineering, which he and his followers hoped would transform society for the better.\textsuperscript{12}

Impressionism and pointillism were two significant movements and had gained wide acceptance among artists and the general public. But, some artists become dissatisfied with the limitations of these styles and went beyond them in various directions as they did not share one common idea.

![Image of Le Mont Sainte-Victoire, Paul Cézanne, 1902-1906](image)

Paul Cézanne was the most significant Post-Impressionist painter whose work provides the base to the development of abstraction in the 20th century art. Through a desire to break reality down into basic forms and taking into consideration the instability of the artists’ viewpoint, Cézanne had begun to push painting further towards abstraction. Cézanne’s works become a great source of inspiration for the further generation of artists. “Cézanne's work demonstrates a mastery of design, color, composition and draftsmanship. His often repetitive,
sensitive and exploratory brushstrokes are highly characteristic and clearly recognizable. He used planes of color and small brushstrokes that build up to form complex fields; at once both a direct expression of the sensations of the observing eye and an abstraction from observed nature. The paintings convey Cézanne's intense study of his subjects, a searching gaze and a dogged struggle to deal with the complexity of human visual perception."  

His studies of ‘Le Mont Sainte-Victoire’ (Fig. 2.7) in his later period was a significant series of paintings in this context.

In his earlier works, Cézanne was often concerned with the figure in the landscape, imaginatively painted. Later in his works, he became more interested in working from direct observation. He developed a style of painting, in which he structurally designed whatever he perceived into simple forms and color planes. As he said "I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums."

Cézanne was interested in the simplification of natural forms to their geometric essentials, as he stated that "May I repeat what I told you here: treat nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point. Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth... lines perpendicular to this horizon give depth. But nature for us men is more depth than surface, whence the need to introduce into our light vibrations, represented by the reds and yellows, a sufficient amount of blueness to give the feel of air."

The other significant post-impressionists were Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. They created their own style of painting to express their inner world. Van Gough uses the colours in a much unusual manner, in which colours becomes expression of his inner feeling in his painting. Gauguin also created his own style in which he started painting from his imagination rather than to use nature as a model.

Later, in 1996, Maurice Denis stated that “a painting--before being a warhorse, a nude woman, or an anecdote--is essentially a surface plane covered with pigments disposed in a certain manner.” Abstraction had not even been born but the figurative painters themselves, such as Denis, had already announced it. As the
represented object increasingly lost significance in their eyes, in consequence the canvas as object gained in importance.

The Fauvism was highly influenced from the post-impressionist painting of Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. Fauve artists also used the bright colours and bold brushwork in their paintings. They chose their color and brushwork on the basis of their emotive qualities. “Fauves reclaimed Impressionism’s direct joyous embrace of nature and combined it with Post-Impressionism’s heightened color contrasts and emotional expressive depth. They emancipated color from its role of describing eternal reality and concentrated on the medium’s ability to communicate directly the artist’s experience before that reality by exploring the pure chromatic intensity of paint”\(^{17}\)

The Fauves introduced a new kind of simplicity and purism to their art, as Matisse state “This is the starting point of Fauvism, the courage to return to the purity of means”. Fauve artist used the expressive non-descriptive color, bold linear contour, and a distorted form of perspective in their compositions. “They saw color as autonomous, a subject in and of itself, not merely an adjunct to nature.”\(^{18}\) “Most important of all, the Fauvist painters committed themselves to pictorial autonomy, which yielded an art delicately poised between expressions derived from emotional subjective experience and expression stimulated by pure optical sensation.”\(^{19}\)

Most significant exponent of Fauvism was Henri Matisse who leads the twentieth century’s first avant-garde style. Matisse along with their contemporaries found simplified geometrical forms which have a new vocabulary of decorative motifs for their design based compositions. Matisse used color in a variety of ways, as he wrote “What I am after all, is expression… Expression to my way of thinking does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The occupied by figures or objects, the empty space around them, the proportions, everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter’s disposal for the expression of his feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and will play the role conferred upon it, be it principal or secondary. All that is not useful in the picture is detrimental. A work of art must be harmonious in
its entirety; for superfluous details would, in the mind of the beholder, encroach upon the essential elements.”

His paintings such as ‘Yellow Curtain’ (Fig.2.8) and ‘French Window at Collioure’ (Fig.2.9) were significant in the context of simplification of form and the use of colours in the fabrication of composition. His simplification in the painting reduced the form of the objects to the level of abstraction, and creates an autonomous form in itself.

![Fig.2.8. The Yellow Curtain, Henri Matisse, 1915.](image1)

![Fig.2.9. French Window at Collioure, Henry Matisse, 1914](image2)

Exploring the Fauves’ interest in primitive art and also inspired by Cézanne were the artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque who had become pioneers of the Cubist movement. Cubist painters were highly influenced from Cezanne’s geometrization of nature, his abandonment of scientific perspective, and his emphasis on the two-dimensional canvas surface. Picasso was the most significant artist of this era. He combined the pictorial technique of Cezanne with formal elements from primitive African sculpture and mask art. This assimilation of two different art forms gives birth to the Cubist vocabulary, which was first appeared in his 1907’s painting entitled ‘Les Demoiselles d’Avignon’ (Fig. 2.10).
“In cubist artworks, objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form, instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.” The most significant practitioners of this tendency were the Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris. “The Cubist treatment of space differed significantly from the in use since the Renaissance. Instead of presenting an object from a single view, assumed to have been the complete view, the Cubists, like Cezanne realized that our visual comprehension of objects consists of many views that we perceive almost at once. They tried to render this visual “information gathering” in their compositions. In their dissection and reconstruction of imagery, they reassessed the notion that painting should reproduce the appearance of reality. Now the very reality of appearances was being questioned. To Cubists the most basic reality involved consolidating optical vignettes instead of reproducing fixed images with photographic accuracy.”

The advent of Analytical Cubism provide a new way of seeing and interpreting the world in the two dimensional art. The Cubist's analyzed their subject's from multiple viewpoints making a distorted painting, but with this
distortion their works weren't total abstract. The most significant contribution of the cubist painters is the new treatment of pictorial space that hinged upon the rendering of objects from multiple and radically different views.

In early period of Analytical cubism, Picasso and Braque both used the higher degree of distortion and simplification, which created a complex structure of form in their compositions. They fragmented or reduced the depicted object until the resulting image become almost illegible. In this phase they had created complicated geometric structures in their paintings, which were difficult to understand. Braque said. “Analytical cubism, in which the object is analyzed, broken down, and dissected, is the term used to describe this high phase of their collaborations.”

![Fig.2.11. Violin and Pallette, George Braque, 1910](image1)
![Fig.2.12. The Mandolin, Pablo Picasso, 1910](image2)
![Fig.2.13. The Guitar Player, Pablo Picasso, 1912, Oil on Canvas](image3)
In the later stage of Analytical period cubist painter did less complex structure in their composition than prior. The most of the themes in this phase were still life or single figures, often with musical instruments as shown in the (Fig. 2.11) and (Fig. 2.12). Around 1912, Picasso had painted ‘The Guitar Player’ (Fig. 2.13) which is a very important work in the context of abstract painting. In this painting Picasso had distorted and simplified the form of guitar player with such a degree that guitar player become invisible from the picture space. In this phase cubist artist also started using the typographical elements in their compositions including newspaper names and headlines. “The art of both Picasso and Braque during the classical phase of cubism derives its character from the very careful balance between representation and abstraction which they sought to maintain… But it is also true that their concern with the purely pictorial problems involved in the evolution of a new approach to space and form, had brought their work to the threshold from which many of their contemporaries were to cross over in to pure abstraction.”

Beside Picasso and Braque, the Spanish painter Juan Gris was also a significant artist of cubist vocabulary. Every element of his painting was considered with classical precision: line, shape, tone, colour and pattern were carefully refined to create an interlocking arrangement free from any unnecessary detail. He used the colours to a greater extent in his cubist compositions. He cubist composition such as 'Still Life with Violin and Glass' and 'Still Life with Open Window, Rue Ravignan' were significant example of his distinct semi-abstract style of painting.

The Italian Futurists further embraced the notion of optics and movement. Their desire was to rid art of old traditions and icons of religious influence and to portray the new dynamism that came about due to advances in machinery at the time. Taking inspiration from Cubism, the Filippo Marinetti and other artists from Italy comes together under the banner of Futurism. These artists had emphasized the ideas of motion and dynamism, because they represented the technological triumph of man over nature. Futurism attracted many young artists including Umberto Boccioni, Carlos Carrà, and Russolo, Balla and Severini.

The Italian painter Umberto Boccioni wrote in ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist painting that “Everything moves, everything runs, everything turns rapidly.
A figure in never stationary before us but appears and disappears incessantly. Though the persistence of images on the retina, things in movement multiply are distorted, succeeding each other like vibrations in the space through which they traverse.\textsuperscript{25}

![Fig.2.14. Dynamism of a Soccer Player, Umberto Boccioni, 1913](image)

Futurist painters take dynamism and motion as basic principles of their art. Among them Umberto Boccioni was one of the most significant artists of the movement. His paintings such as ‘Forces of a Street’, ‘Dynamism of a Soccer Player’ (Fig. 2.14) and ‘States of Mind’ seem to represent the perfect expression to the themes of Futurism. In his painting he painted the dynamic mechanical movement, speed, light, energy and noise and all that things fused into one visual experience, which are more abstract in imagery and essence. Giacomo Balla’s
paintings ‘Abstract Speed + Sound’ (Fig. 2.15), ‘Mercury Passing Before the Sun’ and ‘Black and White Synthesis of Movement’ were also important works in the context of abstract imagery depicted by themes like speed and sound. Severini was not interested in the subject of the machine and motion as his fellow artists. He gradually works on the dance, light and movement to express Futurist theories. Although his works was not fully abstract but his compositions were as dynamic as the other futurist artists, for example as ‘Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal Tabarin’, ‘Sea = Dance’ (Fig. 2.16) and ‘Spherical Expansion of Light’.

![Image of Sea = Dancer, Gino Severini, 1914]

Fig.2.16. Sea = Dancer, Gino Severini, 1914

Futurist artists take such themes for their inspiration, which were very abstract in its own nature. As Carlo Carra wrote “We Futurists attest that we are opening fresh paths in bringing the elements of sound, noise, and smell into painting. As artists we have already created a love of modern life in its essential dynamism.”

2.2. Early twentieth Century Abstraction in Europe

The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of many dynamic schools of art in Europe. Two of these Supermatism and De-Stijl were dedicated to pure abstraction or nonobjective art. Nonobjective art differs from the abstraction of Cubism or Futurism in its total lack of representational elements. It does not use nature or visual reality as a point of departure; it has no subject other
than that of the forms, colors and lines that compose it. In nonobjective art the earlier experiments in abstracting images by Cezanne and then by the Cubists reached their logical conclusion.

Kandinsky is recognized as the first painter of pure abstraction although several artists were creating nonobjective works at about the same time. The two major centers for abstract are were Russia and Holland.

2.2.1. Der Blaue Rieter

Kandinsky formed a group named Der Blaue Reiter in 1912 at Munich, with the collaboration of likeminded expressionist artists such as August Macke and Franz Marc. The name of the group comes from a painting of Kandinsky created in 1903. The group takes serious initiative in the movement for the revival of German art of the early 20th century.

Within the group, stylistic approaches and objectives varied from artist to artist; however, the artists shared a common desire to express or depict subjective emotions rather than the objective reality. They accomplished their aims through distortion, exaggeration, primitivism and abstraction. Most of the associated artists of the group gravitate to abstract or non-representational imagery. “The Blaue Reiter artists broke traditional spatial boundaries by redefining not just the subject, but the means of conception and presentation of subjects.”27 They focused on the expansion of modern art; the spiritual and symbolic associations of color; and a spontaneous, intuitive approach to painting. Members were interested in European medieval art and primitivism, as well as the contemporary, non-figurative art scene in France. As a result of their encounters with cubist, fauvist and rayonist ideas, they moved towards abstraction.

Franz Marc was another significant artist of Der Blaue Reiter. His early work was influenced by the French Impressionists, but it is around 1910 when we begin to see his personal style breaking through. His work from this point onwards is dominated by depictions of animals, which he represented in a distorted manner. Around 1912, representational forms of animal in his paintings transformed in to abstract forms, which is gradually visible in his work such as ‘Fighting Forms’ and
‘Broken Forms’ (Fig.2.17) which is dominated by swirling shapes and contrast colours. The animal motifs which once conveyed a sense of emotion no longer held their appeal in the composition. The application of paint and the division of the picture plane through the use of lines and geometric shapes now carried the emotional charge in his painting.

Around 1913, Marc had painted his first complete non-representational work. He no longer gave descriptive titles to these works but entitled them ‘Small Compositions’ because of their small size. In this series of non-representational works his ‘Small Composition III’ (Fig.2.18) was a significant work, which he created around 1913-14. Whole composition was made out of small colourful
circular forms, which were juxtaposed in a manner that created a little motion and tension in the picture space.

Der Blaue Reiter organized two exhibitions consecutively in 1911 and 1912, which travelled across Germany. The group also released an almanac, called ‘The Blue Rider Almanac’ in which participants offer their reflections on the history and development of painting. “The Blaue Reiter almanac was not only an attempt to expound their views on many forms of art and the people responsible for creating them; it also began to reconstruct the textual ‘space’ of the medium in which the idea was produced.”28 It also features contemporary art works along with the primitive and folk art. The group was disintegrated with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Franz Marc and August Macke were killed in combat. Wassily Kandinsky, Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky were forced to move back to Russia because of their Russian citizenship.

2.2.2. Wassily Kandinsky and evaluation of Abstract Painting

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow in 1866 and studied law and economics at the University of Moscow. His visits to Paris and an exhibition of Impressionist painting in Moscow aroused his interest in art and, at the age of thirty, he refused the job as professors of law in order to pursue study in painting. He was studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich.

In 1896, an exhibition of Impressionist painters was held in Moscow, for the first time Kandinsky see the impressionists work including the painting of Monet’s ‘Haystack’ (Fig. 2.5). This painting deeply influenced the imagination of Kandinsky as he wrote “I noticed with surprise and confusion that the picture not only gripped me, but impressed itself ineradicably upon my memory...What was... quite clear to me was the unsuspecting power of the palette, previously concealed from me, which exceeded all my dreams. Painting took on a fairy-tale power and splendor. And, albeit unconsciously, objects were discredited as an essential element within the picture.”29

Another experience sharpened the Kandinsky's recognition of the autonomous compositional qualities of form and colour. One day when he was
working in his studio in Munich, he noticed a strange painting in his studio, and his attention was immediately captivated by the harmony of colours and unrecognizable forms. It wasn't until a moment later that he recognized the unknown composition as one of his own paintings that had simply been placed upside down. Both episodes influenced Kandinsky to withdraw from the world of representational imagery.

Fig. 2.19. The Blue Rider, Wassily Kandinsky, 1903

Kandinsky had painted ‘The Blue Rider’ (Fig. 2.19) around 1903, which was a significant painting of his career as it show the direction that Kandinsky would take only a few years later. From 1906 to 1908 Kandinsky spent a great deal of time on traveling across Europe. Kandinsky had become aware of recent developments in sciences, as well as the advances of modern artists who had contributed to radically new ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

“Kandinsky was the first artist to create a completely abstract or non-representational painting in Western Art." He logically and methodically developed the creation of what he termed non-objective painting. In the process, he evolved a firm theoretical basis for his new painting. In 1912, he published his theoretical treatises ‘Concerning the Spiritual in Art’, in which he stated that art should be concerned with the spiritual in life and not with the material. “He believed that art should appeal to the soul rather than to the eye.” Kandinsky said that a work of art should consist of two elements, the inner and the outer. “The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist; this emotion has the capacity to evoke a similar emotion in the viewer.”

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He painted ‘First Abstract Watercolour’ (2.20) in Munich, around 1910. In that painting, there is no any recognisable subject matter had painted. There is a kind of colourful swirl of reds, pale blues, blacks, and yellows suggesting some kind of maelstrom of activity in which any indication of external subject matter seems totally accidental. “Kandinsky has not only produced a work whose sensorial magnificence and invention richness eclipses those of its most remarkable contemporaries; he has given moreover an explicit theory of abstract painting, exposing its principles with the highest precision and the highest clarity. In this way the painted work is coupled with an ensemble of texts that enlighten it and that make at the same time of Kandinsky one of the major theorists of the art.”

Kandinsky was deeply influenced from the music because of its abstract nature, as it does not represent the exterior world but rather to express in an
immediate way the inner feelings of the human heart. Kandinsky sometimes used musical terms to entitle his paintings such as in ‘Improvisations’ and ‘Composition’, such as ‘Composition VII’ (Fig. 2.21)

Kandinsky gives immense importance to the artist’s ‘inner necessity’ as he stated in Concerning the Spiritual in Art “The artist is not only justified in using any form necessary for his purposes, but it is his very duty to do so……….That is to be considered beautiful which results from an inner spiritual need, as only that which is spiritual can be beautiful.”

His ‘inner necessity’ to express his emotional perceptions led to the development of an abstract style of painting that was based on the non-representational properties of color and form. He believed that color could be used in a painting as something autonomous and apart from a visual description of an object or other form. Kandinsky achieved abstraction not only based on theory but also based on his experiments with the pictorial space. As Will Grohmann wrote “Kandinsky did not want to paint decorative works, states of mind, or music. He consciously aimed at the pictorial, and for this reason he had to try to retain the forms he had intuitively discovered, but at the same time he filled them with the content of his lived experience.”

In 1921 Kandinsky joined the Bauhaus School at Weimar on invitation from Walter Gropius, who envisioned a union of fine art and craft that would provide design models for industrial production. The Bauhaus was an experimental school of architecture and art. Kandinsky headed the Bauhaus workshop of painting. And here he had published his second important theoretical book ‘Point and Line to Plane’.

In that phase, Kandinsky experimented with the colours and geometrical forms, which took an increasing importance in his painting, particularly circle, half-circle, the angle, rectangles, straight lines and curves. This period was a period of intense production. In that period, he had painted some significant compositions such as ‘On White-II’ in 1923, ‘Yellow-red-blue’ (Fig.2.22) in 1925 and ‘Several Circles’ (Fig.2.23) in 1926. Kandinsky shows a certain kind of freedom in each of
his paintings by the treatment of planes, rich colors with magnificent tonal gradations.

![Fig.2.22. Yellow – Red – Blue, Wassily Kandinsky, 1925](image)

![Fig.2.23. Several Circles, Wassily Kandinsky, 1926](image)

In 1933, Kandinsky left the Germany and settled in Paris, In Paris he spent a quite isolated life because of the absence of recognition of abstract painting in the artistic fashion of the Paris, which is being dominated by Impressionism and cubism. That was the time when, biomorphic forms with non-geometric outlines appear in his paintings. Now Kandinsky did not used primary colours in his compositions. He worked with soft, refined, subtle nuances of colour. He also occasionally mixed sand with paint to give a textural surface to his paintings. His compositions of this period such as ‘Composition IX’ in 1936, ‘Colourful Ensemble’ in 1938, ‘Complex-
Simple’ in 1939, ‘Composition X’ in 1939, ‘Sky Blue’ in 1940 shows a vast synthesis of his previous work, in which he used all elements to enrich them.

2.2.3 Orphism in Paris

Orphism is a kind of abstract or semi-abstract painting practiced by a group of artists in Paris between 1911 and 1914. Orphism had much influence to the fragmented forms of cubism. However, while cubist artist paints almost in monochromatic colours, Orphist artist used bright and passionate colours in their compositions. The name ‘Orphism’ was first used in 1913 by the poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire. He used the name Orphism to refer the paintings of Robert Delaunay, relating them to Greek poet and singer ‘Orpheus’.

Most significant artist of Orphism was Robert Delaunay, and other artists in his circle included Czech painter Franz Kupka along with Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. Initially the Orphisms based their pictures on the external world.

In 1911, Robert Delaunay did a series of paintings depicting the Eiffel Tower in fragmented form, which clearly show his interest in the formal structure of the composition rather than the subject matter. Delaunay studied the scientific colour theories of Michel-Eugène Chevreul and with this knowledge they created a new, abstract imagery that depicted the illusory effects of contrasting colours. Delaunay had painted the Window series followed by Cicular form series and Disk series. Among them his woke of 1912 ‘Simultaneous Windows on the City’ (Fig. 2.24) was an important work which was very near to abstraction in its fabrication of form. “Unlike Kandinsky’s abstraction, which is supported by a spiritualistic reflection, Delaunay’s non-objective art is an attempt to create a new type of realism, capable of expressing, through pure color, the new experiences awaiting us in the technological and industrial society of the future, such as aviation and automobile travel.”

Around 1913, he had created a series of work incorporating the forms based on sun and moon. Delaunay had exposed himself directly to the colour and light effect of the sun, and synthesizes these experiences into painting. In his painting
‘First Simultaneous Disk’ (Fig.2.25) Delaunay takes this development further and paint complete non-representational composition. He divided the round canvas into the concentrically organized circles; each circle is divided horizontally and vertically into four semi-circular segments. This work was a significant in the development of his artistic practice, which takes him into the world of non-objective art.

Fig.2.24. Simultaneous Windows on the City, Robert Delaunay, 1912

Fig.2.25. First Simultaneous Disk, Robert Delaunay, 1913-14
Frank Kupka has developed a new pictorial technique by plan the color in a unique manner. This technique involves a superposition of prismatic colors by vertical planes. Kupka had a great interest in color theory. “Around 1910, he executes a series of paintings entitled ‘Disks of Newton’ (Fig. 2.26), which were actually inspired from colour wheel explored by Sir Issac Newton.”38 These were the earlier instance of abstract paintings painted by French artists.

![Fig.2.26. Disks of Newton, Frantisek Kupka, 1912](image)

Orphism aimed to work with recognizable subject matter and to rely on form and color alone to communicate meaning. “In fact, the term ‘pure painting’ (which Apollinaire used as synonym for Orphism) did not necessarily mean completely non-representational painting: it signified painting which had its own internal structure independent of naturalistic structural devices.”39 Most of the Orphist painters like Delaunay, Kupka, Picabia and Leger were very different in their stylistic approaches but by the 1912 paintings of these painters had reached equivalent degrees of purity. They still represented recognizable objects, but broke them into the dynamic and non-naturalistic structures. Frank Kupka achieved this non-naturalistic structure in his series ‘Disc of Newton’ and later Delaunay also achieved this non-naturalistic structure in his ‘Sun, Moon, Simultaneous series, as Apollinaire described the Orphist as “a new world with its own laws.”40

The Orphists painters were rooted in cubism but moved toward a pure lyrical abstraction, seeing painting as the bringing together of a sensation of bright colors. The movement is seen as key in the evolution of Cubism to Abstraction. More concerned with the expression and significance of sensation, this movement retained
recognizable subjects but was absorbed by increasingly abstract structures. “Thus, even before the outbreak of war, there was a slackening in the French tendency towards abstraction which virtually ceased during the war. If one follows these shifts and changes in terms of a response to specific pressures in a specific society at a specific moment in time, one can better appreciate that it was the artists’ struggle to express certain forms of consciousness rather than any theoretical dedication to abstraction which caused them to develop non-representational form.”

The Orphist group was disintegrated by the First World War, but in spite of its short life it had considerable influence. Several of the German expressionists, notably Paul Klee, August Macke, and Franz Marc, were greatly impressed with Delaunay's paintings.

2.2.4 Vorticism in Britain

Vorticism was an art movement led by British artists in the early twentieth century. It is considered to be the one of the significant British movement of in the context of abstract painting. The Vorticism group began with the Rebel Art Centre which Wyndham Lewis and others established by synthesizing the characteristics of Cubism and Futurism.

![Vorticist Composition, Wandem Lewis,1915](image-url)
The Vorticists forged a distinctive style combining machine-age forms and energetic imagery with the geometrical fragmentation of Cubism, in order to illustrate the dynamism of the modern world. “At their best the Vorticists achieved a strong visualization of the headlong flight of Europe into mechanical barbarity, an awareness of brutalization of man by his irresponsible control of his environment that is lacking in the idealized art of Cubism and the romanticized art of Futurism. This, and the acceleration of forms into depth, was the significant contribution of Vorticism to the art of twentieth century.” Vorticist artists had been used the bold lines and harsh colors in their compositions to create interest in the picture space.

The name ‘Vorticism’ was given to the movement by Ezra Pound in 1913. Wyndham Lewis was the most important artist associated with movement, had been producing paintings in the same style for a year or so previously. His work is highly inspired from the aerial photography and anticipated with the works of Malevich’s Supermatist paintings. “The resemblance of vorticist and supermatist works are probably due to the fact they were both influenced by Cubism and Futuris, by photography and recent developments in engineering technology and architecture.” Other than Lewis, artists associated with the movement were William Roberts, Edward Wadsworth, David Bomberg, Frederick Etchells, Cuthbert Hamilton, and Lawrence Atkinson.

2.2.5 The Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was the most influential modernist art school founded by Walter Gropius in 1919 at Weimar, Germany. The objective of the Bauhaus was the synthesis of arts, considering that the painting, architecture and sculpture should be combined together to create a better future. As Walter Gropius stated in the Bauhaus manifesto “The final goal of any plastic activity is the building! To decorate it was once the most notable task of the plastic arts...... Today, they delight in an autonomy that may, again, lead to a collaboration among all creative artists.”

The school emerged out of desires to reunite the fine arts and applied arts and to reform education. The Bauhaus has proved enormously influential for the approaches to education in the arts. Walter Gropius invites some most original artists to teach at Bauhaus. Most of the artist had come to teach at Bauhaus were masters of
abstraction and concrete art, including Johannes Itten, Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, László Moholy-Nagy and Joseph Albers. These brilliant teachers provided a finest level of theoretical and technical teaching to the Bauhaus which has rarely been equaled. Most of the students from very beginning start to learn painting in a non-academic manner. The objective of such type of teaching in visual arts was to stimulate and sharpen the creativity of the students.

The Bauhaus shifted Weimar to Dessau in 1925. At Dessau, a considerable shift from expressionists to geometrical and constructivist principles had apparent in the spirit of Bauhaus. Theoretical works and method & techniques of the Bauhaus teachers including Klee, Kandinsky, Moholy-Nagy along with the other prominent abstract painter such as Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich were collected and published in ‘Bauhaus Books’. In 1932 Bauhaus shifted to Berlin, where the Nazis closed this institute in 1933. Most of the artists associated with the Bauhaus disseminated to various places in Europe and U.S.A.

Besides teaching all of these artists still continue to their practice of painting. Swiss painter Johannes Itten was a significant artist at Bauhaus. He was highly influence from the German expressionist paintings specifically from the Der Balue Reiter. Wassily Kandinsky was the leading abstract painter. For Kandinsky, Bauhaus period was a period of intense production. In that period, Kandinsky experimented with the geometrical forms and colours in his compositions. Another significant artist at Bauhaus was the Paul Kee, whose work was important in the context of abstract tendencies in art.

He served as the model for those artists who wished to express their own sensations of man and nature by using variations of form, light and color in a symbolic fashion to explain the aesthetic emotion aroused by a natural motif. Paul Klee was born in Switzerland near the city of Berne in 1879. In 1898 he went to Munich to study art.

Klee's work was concerned with the expression of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious experiences of the individual and also with the formative processes of nature. Klee observed and analyzed his feelings. “His paintings cannot be judged as representations of the ordinary visual world. Their
He valued highly the individual and believed that each artist should express his own personal ideas and feeling about nature in his paintings. Klee’s theories emphasized the importance of the individual mind and the mysterious workings of nature.

Klee joined the Bauhaus in 1921 on the invitation from the Walter Gropius. During his stay at the Bauhaus, Klee developed an approach to teaching the fundamental principles of design that was firmly grounded in his pedagogical methods. Teaching was highly important for him because it enabled him to synthesize his thinking about art. He had written a series of theoretical notes about colour and form, and about relation to theory practice, which were published as ‘Pedagogical Sketchbook’ in 1925.

The Bauhaus period from 1921 to 1931 was the long and fruitful years of Klee’s career. The pictures he produced often relate to the interaction of colour and graphic expression. “While at the Bauhaus, Klee incorporated linear and color grids into his classroom exercises, and he fully realized the potential of the loosely constructed magic square as a structural model for his abstract color compositions, including Rhythmisches.” He painted some of the crucial paintings in this period such as ‘Dream City’ in 1921 (Fig. 2.29), ‘Harmony in Blue = Orange’ in 1923, ‘Ancient Sounds’ in 1925 (Fig. 2.30), ‘Urban Perspective’ (Fig. 2.31) in 1928, ‘Rhythmical’ (Fig. 2.32), and ‘Fire in the Evening’ (Fig. 2.33) in 1929. All of these works shows his leaning towards the non-representational imagery.
2.2.6. Piet Mondrian, De-Stijl and Neoplasticism

Piet Mondrian was born in Amersfoort, Holland, in 1872. He was trained at the Amsterdam Academy. Mondrian had been started his career as an impressionistic landscape painter. His landscapes depicted his native Holland consisting windmills, fields, and rivers, initially in the Dutch Impressionist manner. Mondrian experimented in a variety of styles and varied techniques exploring his search for his own personal style.
Fig. 2.34 Gray Tree, Piet Mondrian, 1911

Fig. 2.35. Composition, Piet Mondrian, 1916

Fig. 2.36. Composition with Blue, Yellow, Black, and Red, Piet Mondrian, 1922

Fig. 2.37. Composition II in Yellow, Blue and Red, Piet Mondrian, 1930
In 1910 he came to Paris and starts working there. He was immediately drawn influence to the geometric compositions of Cubism. His earliest paintings that show inkling to the abstraction comes with a series on trees. Paintings such as ‘The Grey Tree’ (Fig. 2.34) in 1912 and his various studies of trees from that year still contain representational elements, but his compositions are increasingly dominated by the geometric forms and interlocking planes.

He went back to the Holland during the war years. In Holland, his studies of Cubist theory led him to reduce his forms to lines and planes and his palette to the primary colors. During this period, he met with Brat Van der Lake and Theo van Doesburg. At that time, both the artists were exploring their own personal style toward abstraction. Along with Van Doesburg, and Van der Lake, Mondrian founded the group named ‘De Stijl’. The group also published a journal with same name ‘De Stijl’.

All the artists associated with the group sought to express themselves in a new language of non-objective forms. They advocated pure abstraction by a reduction to the essentials of form and colour “To the members of De Stijl, abstraction is a moral necessity rather than an esthetic principle. According to Mondrian and his colleagues, it is neither more nor less than delivering the world
from tragedy. It is an effect of efflux generated from the particular and individual visions achieved by dominating an objective and consequently arriving at universal plastic language intended to prepare for the advent of a better world.”

In 1917, Mondrian had coined the term ‘New Plasticism’ with a series of article entitled ‘Neo-Plasticism in Painting’ which was published in the journal De-Stijl. By the 1920’s Mondrian had formulated his own theories of art. In that year, Mondrian published his book entitled ‘The Neo Plasticism’. He believes that reality can only be expressed through the equilibrium of dynamic movements of form and color in plastic art. As he wrote “This new plastic idea will ignore the particulars of appearance, that is to say, natural form and colour. On the contrary, it should find its expression in the abstraction of form and colour, that is to say, in the straight line and the clearly defined primary colour.” These ideas led Mondrian to the principle of the balance of unequal opposites by right angles, and the simplification of color to, the primary colours and neutral, black and white.

“Mondrian's abstract art dehumanized and destroyed the image in its natural appearance and liberated painting from the reproduction of the visual appearance of the world.” However, his paintings were deeply rooted in nature, but emphasizing the forms over the content. As he wrote a letter to H.P. Bremmer that “I construct lines and color combinations on a flat surface, in order to express general beauty with the utmost awareness. Nature (or, that which I see) inspires me, puts me, as with any painter, in an emotional state so that an urge comes about to make something, but I want to come as close as possible to the truth and abstract everything from that, until I reach the foundation (still just an external foundation!) of things….I believe it is possible that, through horizontal and vertical lines constructed with awareness, but not with calculation, led by high intuition, and brought to harmony and rhythm, these basic forms of beauty, supplemented if necessary by other direct lines or curves, can become a work of art, as strong as it is true.”

For Mondrian, his own theory of art was more than a style of painting; it was both a philosophy and a way of living. Mondrian returned back to France in 1919, where he began to paint his grid-based paintings. Mondrian’s theories of painting
were culminated in his works of this period. In the early paintings of this style the lines delineating the rectangular forms are relatively thin and smaller in paintings. During late 1920s, Mondrian reached at his mature and definitive style of painting. Now thick black lines emerge in his compositions that separated the forms. The rectangular forms are still mostly colored. As the years passed and Mondrian's work evolved further, he also began to paint less colored forms. His painting ‘Composition II in Red, Blue and Yellow’ (Fig. 2.37) is one of the significant paintings of this period. The whole painting is composed out of line and primary colours. “Line and colours are the essence of painting as they are free from their bondage to the imitation of nature.”52 Mondrian's work continued to evolve with subtle refinements during his years in Paris.

In 1940, he had shifted to New York and starts working there. Some of Mondrian's works of this period were complex in nature. His paintings like ‘Broadway Boogie-Woogie’ (Fig.2.38) and ‘Victory Boogie-Woogie’ shows a visible change in the artistic development of Mondrian's work.

2.2.7. Abstraction-Creation Group

In 1931, a group of Paris based abstract artists Georges Vantongerloo, Jean Hélion and Auguste Herbin along with the Theo van Doesburg, leader of ‘Art Concret’ formed an association of international artists. The movement was known as Abstraction-Création. The group’s artistic programme was reflected in its name, and objective of the group was to promote the ideology of pure abstraction in art by bringing together Cubist, Constructivist, Neoplasticist and De Stijl artists.

The primary formal elements, which unified the group were geometric designs and rhythmically structured compositions. Most of the artist associated of with the movement synthesizes the cubist elements, with geometry. The movement had no pre-defined agenda, but it had a greater significance in the context of geometric tendencies in abstraction. As Sonia Delaunay wrote “The current great revolutionary tendencies in art are tendencies towards order, an order of movement and action... After the destruction (Cubism), we have the joy of watching and taking...
part in the reconstruction of a new world: ordered, clear, healthy, generous, optimistic and dynamic.”

They also published their periodical with the same name from 1931 to 1936. The Group had organized several exhibitions throughout the whole Europe. Many artists including Jean Arp, Willi Baumeister, Carl Buchheister, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Antoine Pevsner, Kurt Schwitters, and Sophie Taeuber-Arphad joined the group. The movement also represented the various significant artists including Kandinsky from Russia, Piet Mondrian from Holland etc.

2.2.8. Development of Abstract Art in Europe after World War-II

After the liberation of Paris in 1944, the tradition of modernism continued to exist in France, although it had been driven to inner emigration during the years of occupation. Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse had been the two outstanding representatives of this tradition during the nineteen fifties. The younger representatives of abstract painting, including Georges Mathieu and the two German immigrants Hans Hartung and Wols, came together for the first time in 1948 in Colette Altendy gallery, in the exhibition entitled “H.W.P.S.M.T.B." The name of the exhibition derived from the names of the participating artists. This was significant exhibition, which further helps to regenerate the environment of abstract art in Paris.

Later, The painter Michel Tapie coined the term, ‘L’art Autre’ or another kind of art, a painting style that did not want to be connected with classical modernism, but sought an independent new beginning. It was a group of Paris based artists including Enrico Donati, Lucio Fontana, Asger Jorn, Antoni Tàpies, Pierre Soulages and Jean Bazaine. The group ideology was characterized by its non-objective styles of painting including gestural and lyrical abstraction.

In contrast to this were the representatives of the artist group CoBrA, whose paintings had developed out of a Nordic painting tradition. It was formed in Netherlands and its members came from the three capital cities Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam, and the first letters of these cities’ names were used for
the group’s name. However, group included the Dutch artist Karel Appel, the Belgian Pierre Alechinsky, and the Asger John. Most of the artists associated with the group were clung to some sort of figuration. Their works were highly influenced from the graffiti and motifs of primitive art. Most common idea among these artists was their interest in the free spirit of abstract expressionism.

In Germany the development of abstract modernism had been disintegrated by the Nazi condemnation of any progressive artistic developments as ‘degenerate art’. German artists were forced into either real-or inner emigration. After the political liberation of 1945, artists lost their interest in representational portrayals of the war and its after-effects. Establishment of the Documenta exhibitions in Kassel was also a political acknowledgement of autonomous western art, opposed to the social realism. Artists sought not only to resume the modernist movement with which the Nazis had forcibly broken, but also to bring German art back into the international arena.

2.3. Early Twentieth Century Abstraction in Russia.

2.3.1 Rayonism in Russia

“Rayonism is a style of abstract art that developed in Russia around 1912.”\(^{54}\) The term 'Ray' was derived from the pointed rays of colour that characterised this style. The two major practitioners of the style were Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova. Larionov was highly inspired by the J.M.W. Turner’s use of the light in the painting. He developed a technique to fabricate his painting by juxtaposing rays of slanting lines, which seems very similar to the rays of light.

Rayonism did away with objects altogether while concentrating only on the light that is reflected off them. The painting that emerged by the Rayonist artists had a purity of form as they paints away from all natural form. As Larionov and Goncharova wrote in their manifesto “The style of Rayonnist painting that we advance signifies spatial forms which are obtained arising from the intersection of the reflected rays of various objects, and forms chosen by the artist's will. The ray is depicted provisionally on the surface by a colored line. That which is valuable for
the lover of painting finds its maximum expression in a rayonnist picture. The objects that we see in life play no role here, but that which is the essence of painting itself can be shown here best of all—the combination of color, its saturation, the relation of colored masses, depth, texture. In a sense, this art form was seen as a synthesis of Cubism, it embodied the dynamism of futurism and the colour of Orphism.

![Fig.2.39. Blue Rayonism, Mikhail Larionov, 1913](image)

![Fig.2.40. Rose, black, and yellow, Natalia’s Cats, 1913.](image)

The Donkey's Tale was one of their defining exhibitions in 1912, alongside Der Blaue Reiter, another group of radical painters. The style, however, did not last for long, as both Goncharova and Larionov virtually abandoned easel painting after they left Russia and they had no significant followers. Although this movement was
short-lived, historians argue that it was a significant movement in the development of Russian abstract art. It signified a movement from realism, which had quite a stronghold in Russia, towards an art that was based on pure feeling and freedom.

### 2.3.2 Kazimir Malevich and Supermatism

Shortly after Kandinsky painted his first nonobjective work around 1910 a small group of Russian artists whom he inspired began to follow suit with geometric abstractions related to Cubism and Futurism. A few years later, one of the artists, Kasimir Malevich emerged as a radical innovator.

Malevich’s earliest work shows the influence of cubism, but he emphasized the use of bold line. Around 1912 he began to develop his own style based on non-objective imagery, known as ‘Suprematism’. His style was mainly focused on fundamental geometric forms. He defined Suprematism as “The supremacy of pure feeling in creative art”, independent of the imitation of visual reality. Suprematist art appeared very minimal, consisting of simple, geometric forms composed to give a sense of depth and dynamism. As with Kandinsky, Malevich’s simplified forms began to take on a spiritual quality. After initial works composed of simple squares, Malevich expanded his vocabulary to include the circle and square cross. This led to more complex works which analyzed relationship between numerous geometric forms and their influence on the surrounding space.

He created a Suprematist forms based on fundamental geometric forms; in particular, the square and the circle. As John Golding wrote “Malevich had always been interested in geometry, but it is now, between 1913 and 1915, that it becomes for him an obsessive concern.” In 1915, Malevich painted his most significant composition entitled ‘Black Square’ (Fig. 2.41), in which he painted black square on the white canvas. Malevich's idea was based on all that had accumulated in the literature and art of the period and represented a complete break from everything that he had previously attempted. Malevich created the concept of the ‘zero of form’. As he wrote “I have transformed myself in the zero of form and through zero have reached creation, that is, suprematism, the new painterly realism - non-objective creation.” This encouraged the use of very simple motifs, since they best
articulated the shape and flat surface of the canvases on which they were painted. It also encouraged many Suprematists to emphasize the surface texture of the paint on canvas, this texture being another essential quality of the medium of painting.

By 1918, he painted composition such as ‘White on White’ (Fig.2.42). In this painting colors are free from the contrasts and the viewer is now able to contemplate the simple geometric relationship of a square within a square. “It was meant to convey something like final emancipation: a state of nirvana, the ultimate statement of supermatist consciousness.” Malevich describe his search for pure absolute form as “All past and recent paintings before Supermatism has been subjected by the
shapes of nature, waiting to be liberated, to speak in own language, independent of reason, common sense, logic, philosophy, psychology, laws of causalities, and technological changes….Creation exist only where paintings present shapes that take nothing from what has been created in nature, but which proceed from pictorial matter, neither repeating nor modifying the original forms of nature’s objects…”

Malevich’s paintings were non-representational in character as it represents nothing from the natural world. As Larissa Zhadova wrote “His pictures can be described as images of the world’s cosmic space. But they are not copied from nature; this is not the space one sees by looking at the blue sky above one’s head. They are hypothetical images, conceptual images, plastic formulation of images, “factorizations” carried out by the artist’s imagination.”

It is interesting to note that Kandinsky and Malevich, both Russians, initiated the two major trends in twentieth century art: expressionistic abstraction and geometric abstraction. They exemplify a stylistic polarity that exists to the present day. The Supermatist artists included Aleksandra Ekster, Olga Rozanova, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Anna Kagan, Ivan Kliun, Liubov Popova, Nikolai Suetin, Ivan Puni and Ksenia Boguslavskaya.

2.4. Mid twentieth Century Abstraction in United States

2.4.1. Early Initiatives

The pivotal event that brought modernism to America was the International Exhibition of Modern Art of 1913, today better known as the Armory Show. The exhibition exposed American audiences to abstract art for the first time. Many ridiculed the fragmentation of cubism and rejected the charged colors of fauvism and expressionism. A few, however, embraced abstraction, and gradually the new styles were incorporated into the American visual vocabulary.

Energized by new artistic possibilities, American artists synthesized European innovations into a variety of forms. Lyonel Feininger's cubist constructions incorporate the color and movement typical of Italian futurism. Max Weber and John Marin fractured images and reassembled the faceted planes into
dynamic compositions. The organic abstractions of Georgia O'Keeffe, Joseph Stella and Arthur Dove add a new dimension to familiar forms from the natural world. The Fauvist and German Expressionist artist has a great impact in the United States as well as Europe.

Georgia Totti O'Keeffe was an important American artist in the context of abstract painting. She synthesizes abstraction and representation in her compositions. Her paintings present crisply contoured forms that are replete with subtle tonal transitions of varying colors. She inspires from flowers, rocks, shells, and landscape and transformed her subject matter into simplified abstract images.

Soon after she moved to New York, she began working primarily in oil, which represented a shift away from her having worked mainly in watercolor in the 1910s, and by the mid-1920s, she began making large scale paintings of natural forms from close up, as if seen through a magnifying lens. In these paintings, she magnified and abstracted the details of her botanical subjects, so that often a large canvas was filled with but a fragment of the intersection of petals. These flowers have a yearning reaching organic quality, and her botany seems to function as a metaphor for zoology. “That is her plants are animistic; they seem to grow because of will, not merely because of the blind interactions of the unfolding of the genetic
code with water, sun, and minerals…… Georgia O'Keeffe is more concerned with the essential identity of things rather than the mere visual appearance.⁶²

John Marin showed great individualism in his work. He was considered one of the earlier American artists, who had started experiments with abstract forms. Many of his paintings, however, such as ‘Deer Isle’ (Fig.2.44) show the influences of cubism and the distortions and vibrant colors of expressionism. Earlier he paints landscapes in water colours, but when he came back to America after his tour to Europe, he moved towards oil painting. In his later oil paintings he applied the swaths of paint on the canvas and because of his tendency some critics have been considered Marin as a forerunner of the Abstract Expressionist movement in New York. Certainly Marin was fascinated by his ability to render abstractions of the external world. Marin told to Mackinlet Helm, that he tried “to give paint a chance to show itself entirely as paint.”⁶³

Artists living in New York in the 1930s were the beneficiaries of an increasingly sophisticated network of museums and galleries which staged major exhibitions of modern art. The Museum of Modern Art mounted shows such as ‘Cubism and Abstract Art’, ‘Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism’, and a major retrospective of Picasso. And 1939 saw the opening of the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, which was later renamed as ‘Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum’, which boasted an important collection of Kandinsky’s works.
Due to the World War, France in particular lost its political and cultural supremacy. The United States, on the other hand, advanced to the position of the world's leading art nation. The old art capital of Paris was displaced by the young metropolis of New York. The town attained this position for itself not just on its own, however; instead this conquest was initiated by the impulses coming from Europe. Many leading artists, but also some younger ones, had to leave their European homelands to migrate to the USA to escape persecution by the Nazis and the terror of the war. Josef Albers, Max Ernst, Hans Hofmann, Marcel Duchamp, and Piet Mondrian provided pioneering force to a young generation of American artists. The presence of European immigrants in the New York art scene, their exhibitions in the galleries there, and their teaching activities in American colleges, exercised an immense influence on young American painters. Eager to learn, the New York painters quickly developed its independent artistic positions of their own.

The popular phrase that abstraction was a universal language of art, however, lead to a belief in a coherence and homogeneity that had never existed in the abstract painting of the nineteen fifties. The great number of different conceptions is more indicative of the coexistence of independent and contradictory artistic approaches than to a unified school of abstraction. The following list, as extensive as it may seem, still gives only a selection of stylistic descriptions of the abstract painting of the time: Art Informal, Abstract Expressionism, Lyric Abstraction, LArt autre, Emotional Non-Figurative, Tachism, and Action Painting. Some of these concepts actually identify national schools such as the Ecole de Paris or the New York School.

Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Mark Rothko particularly represent that first generation of American artists through whom New York achieved its leading position in contemporary art.

2.4.2 Abstract Expressionism

Abstract Expressionism is a more refined term that refers to an art movement of non-representative painting, which flourished in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. At mid-century the influences of earlier non-objective painting the
colorful representation of expressionism, cubist distortion, the automatist processes of surrealism, and some other factors converged in New York art scene. From this artistic environment, Abstract Expressionism emerged. The term ‘Abstract expressionism’ was first applied to American art by the art critic Robert Coates in 1946.64

During the 40’s some of the progressive European artists began to visit or immigrate to United States Joseph Albers, Ozenfant and Hans Hoffmann were living in the United States before 1940. Most of them were also influential teachers and they disseminating the new set of values among the upcoming artist in the States. These European artists helped to transform the face of American art.

![The Golden Wall, Hans Hofmann, 1961](image)

Hans Hofmann born in Bavaria in 1880, studied in Paris early in this century. In Europe, He had witnessed the Fauvist’s use of bright colors and the Cubists distortion of shapes into semi abstract planes. He immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1932 to teach, first at University of California, Berkeley then at Art Student League, in New York and finally he established Hans Hofmann School of Fine Art in New York City and in Provincetown.

“Hans Hofmann’s greatest concern as a painter, teacher and theoretician lay in his concepts of pictorial structure which were based on architectonic principle rooted in Cubism.”65 Later, Hofmann would claim that paintings such as these were
derived from nature, even though no representational imagery can be found. In their expressionistic use of color and their abstract subject matter, Hofmann's paintings form a clear base for the emergence of Abstract Expressionism.

Fig.2.46. One Year the Milkweed, Arshile Gorky, 1944

Arshile Gorky was an important painter whose work shows a critical link between the European surrealism and American Abstract expressionism. “The vital task was a wedding of abstraction and surrealism. out of these opposites some-thing new could emerge, and Gorky’s work is part of the evidence that this is true.” Abstractions of the late 1940s show the influence of expressionists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Surrealist such as Joan Miro. His surrealist works also shows the primitive qualities of his composition. Gorky’s transitional works form a logical bridge between early twentieth century abstraction, automatist surrealism, and the gestural painting of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

Abstract Expressionism is characterized by spontaneous execution, large gestural brushstrokes, abstract imagery, and fields of intense color. Many canvases are quite large, lending monumentality to the imagery. The abstract shapes frequently have a calligraphic quality found in the painting of the Far East. However, the scope of the brushstrokes of the New York group was vast and muscular compared with the gentle, circumscribed brushstrokes of Chinese and Japanese artists.

“The movement’s name is derived from the combination of emotional intensity and self-denial of the German Expressionists with the anti-figurative
In practice, the term is applied to any number of artists working in New York who had quite different styles, and even applied to work which is neither especially abstract nor expressionist. Pollock's energetic Action Paintings was different both technically and aesthetically, the violent and grotesque Women series of Willem de Kooning, which are figurative paintings and to the serenely shimmering blocks of color in Mark Rothko's work. Among others, artists such as Franz Kline, Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Adolph Gottlieb and Clyford Still were also significant artists.

In a famous letter to the New York Times (June 1943), Gottlieb and Rothko, with the assistance of Newman, wrote: "To us, art is an adventure into an unknown world of the imagination which is fancy-free and violently opposed to common sense. There is no such thing as a good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is critical."68

Abstract Expressionism has many stylistic similarities to the Russian artists of the early twentieth century such as Wassily Kandinsky. Although it is true that spontaneity or of the impression of spontaneity characterized many of the abstract expressionists works, most of these paintings involved careful planning, especially since their large size demanded it. An exception might be the drip paintings of Pollock.

In 1947, Pollock developed a new technique, pouring and dripping thinned paint onto raw canvas laid on the ground, instead of traditional methods of painting in which pigment is applied by brush to primed, stretched canvas positioned on an easel. His first work in this new technique was the ‘Full Fathom Five’ (Fig. 2.47) which he produced in 1947. Pollock’s poured pigment of drip paintings made number of innovations that changed the course of modern painting. Pollock was the first to introduce the concept of overall gestural pattern barely contained by the limits of the canvas. Pollock worked in a highly spontaneous improvisatory manner, almost walking around the canvas pouring, throwing and dripping paint onto it. By
doing this, he claimed to be channeling his inner impulses directly onto the canvas, in a form of subconscious painting. “In the dripped and poured canvases Pollock eliminated all symbols and signs; only the gesture itself remained as a mythic metaphor. This summed up what was radically new about Pollock’s application of automatism: he used the technique express rather than excavate; he translated the act of painting itself into an adventure of self-realization.”

Fig.2.47. Full Fathom Five, Jackson Pollock, 1947

Fig.2.48. Number 1, 1948, Jackson Pollock, 1948
Pollock strongly believed in the role of unconscious mind, of accident and spontaneity, in the creation of art. He was influenced not only by the intellectual impact of the Surrealist automatism, but also what must have been his own impression of walking hand in hand with his own unconscious forces through the realm of artistic expression. “My painting does not come from the easel. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting.”

De Kooning, too, was developing his own version of a highly charged, gestural style, alternating between abstract work and powerful figurative images. De Kooning combined the biomorphic and organic shapes with harsh and jagged lines. He painted some paintings in black and white in which he assimilated the elements of cubism and transform into a dynamic painterly idiom. “In 1950’s De Kooning began to work on his Woman series. Later in the mid-fifties the women paintings gave way to the compositions sometimes called “Abstract Urban Landscapes.” De Kooning works of that time frequently seems obsessed with the violence and agitation of that age. Among these urban landscapes his paintings such as ‘Gotham News’ (Fig. 2.49) was an important work.
For Abstract Expressionists, the authenticity or value of a work lay in its directness and immediacy of expression. A painting is meant to be a revelation of the artist's authentic identity. The artist's gesture in the painting was the most significant thing and was the evidence of the process of creation of the work. It is in reference to this aspect of the work that critic Harold Rosenberg coined the term ‘action painting’ in 1952 as he wrote “At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.”

Artists associated with the technique of action-painting continue to be highly sought-after by critics and collectors.

![Fig.2.50. Elegy to the Spanish Republic #34, Robert Motherwell, 1953-54](image)

Other significant artists including Lee Krasner and Franz Kline were equally engaged in creating an art of dynamic gesture in which every inch of a picture is fully charged. Franz Kline’s works sometimes compared to gigantically enlarged fragments of Chinese calligraphy. Robert Motherwell was also an important painter in this tendency he come with his series entitled ‘Elegy to the Spanish Republic’ (Fig. 2.50), which shows his powerful gesture in almost neutral colours. Cy Twombly also created his own gestural works based on calligraphic linear symbols, which is different in its own manner.
2.4.3 Color field Painting

Around 1950’s, many artists were experimenting in various possibilities of advancement in Abstract Expressionism. A number of Abstract Expressionists started experiments with the use of flat areas or fields of colour in their compositions. They were more interested in the color than the gestural quality of the brushstroke in the picture space. In the colour-field painting “Colour is freed from objective context and becomes the subject in itself.” It emerged as several important artists in America in the late 1940s and 1950s. Artists who subscribed to this manner of painting, such as Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman for instance, created art based on simplified, color-dominated fields. Most of these artist, who practiced with this tendency usually created their compositions in large size format.
“The impulse was, in general, reflective and cerebral, with pictorial means simplified in order to create a kind of elemental impact. Rothko and Newman, among others, spoke of a goal to achieve the sublime rather than the beautiful.”

Mark Rothko painted biomorphic surrealist images in the early 40’s and later in that decade he began to paint the large floating, hazy-edge color fields for which he is renowned. During the 50’s, the color fields consistently assumed the forms of rectangles floating above one another depicted by subtle variations in tone and gesture. The large size of these canvases absorbs the viewer in color. “On the contrary, 'Rothko's Sublimities' stresses metaphorical analogies with landscape and leaps from that way stage to cosmic or apocalyptic mysteries.”

Fig.2.53. Magenta, Black, Green & Orange, Mark Rothko, 1949

Fig.2.54. Stations of the Cross, Barrnet Newman, 1958
Barnett Newman was most significant artist in the context of colour field painting. His works characterized by large areas of flat color separated by thin vertical lines. In his paintings the fabrication of the structure is much simplified in his compositions. In 1948, he created his important series of work entitled ‘Ornament Series’ by which he got his own style of painting. Around 1956, he created another important series of work entitled ‘Station of the Cross’ (Fig. 2.54), which he created almost in neutral or subdued colours. Later, in mid sixties he had created series such as the ‘Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue’, in which he used vibrant colors, often on very large canvases. “Newman saw artist as a revolutionary in search of universal truths, discovered by way of the personal and immediate”.

For some artists of the Abstract Expressionist era, the most important work lay in the bridging of gesture and color field. Artists such as Robert Motherwell and Clifford Still enlarged simple forms and made them the predominant themes of their compositions. Still’s colour field paintings are largely concerned with juxtaposing different colors and surfaces in a variety of formations. Unlike Rothko or Newman, Still's arrangements of form were irregular and jig-jagged. He used the colour in such a manner, which creates the interest in the picture space. “The compositions defy symmetry and even seems to deny the limits of canvas, thus evoking a sense of boundlessness and primary force”.

Abstract Expressionism was a painterly movement. Contours and colors were loosely defined edges were frequently blurred and long brushstrokes trailed off into ripples, streaks, and specks of paint. During the mid-1950s a number of younger abstract artists referred to as the ‘second generation’ New York School began to either build upon or deemphasize this painterly approach some furthered the staining technique the Pollock used in his last years, while others focused increasingly on clarity of line and clearness of edges. Beyond a few common features, their styles were quite different, and they modified and extended in a number of ways the forces that had led to Abstract Expressionism.

Some of these artists such as Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler, and Kenneth Noland became known as color-field painters. Others like Ellsworth Kelly whose work focused on clear geometric shapes with firm contours that separated
them from their fields, were known as hard-edge painters. Many of this new crop of abstract painters, Noland and Kelly among them, also pioneered the shaped canvas, which challenges the traditional orientation of a painting and often extends the work into three-dimensional space. Some artists in the 1980s would use the shaped canvas exclusively in their works.

Fig.2.55. Mountains and Sea, Frankenthaler Helen, 1952

2.4.4 Op Art

Op art, also known as optical art, is a genre of visual art, especially painting, that makes use of optical illusions. Op art is also known as geometric abstraction and hard-edge abstraction, although the preferred term for it is perceptual abstraction. "Optical Art is a method of painting concerning the interaction between illusion and picture plane, between understanding and seeing." Op art works, which were majorly painted in black and white, create an illusion among the viewers, with its pattern of design.

“Op Art, the term coined in 1964 in Time magazine by Jon Borgzinner.” Historically, the Op Art style may be said to have originated in the work of the Victor Vasarely, from Abstract Expressionism. Another major Op artist is the British painter Bridget Riley. Modern interest in the optical art movement stems from 1965 when a major Op Art exhibition in New York, entitled The Responsive Eye, caught public attention. As a consequence, the style began appearing in graphics and advertising as well as fashion design and interior decorations. “The
exhibition focused on the perceptual aspects of art, which result both from the illusion of movement and the interaction of color relationships. Op Art is a perceptual experience related to how vision functions. It is a dynamic visual art, stemming from a discordant figure-ground relationship that causes the two planes to be in a tense and contradictory juxtaposition.

![Tlinko, Victor Vasarely, 1955](image)

Victor Vasarely started his career as a graphic artist. Much of his work is black and white, though he is capable of brilliant colour. Usually he had painted the geometric compositions such as ‘Tlinko’ (Fig. 2.56), which were basically design oriented but integrated into a balance and counterpoint that is organic and intuitive. In his paintings, Vasarely had experimented with the illusion of three dimensions in two-dimensional space through the use of linear perspective and atmospheric effects.

Bridget Riley was significant artist practice with the optical art in Britain. She carefully designed her patterns, which are intuitive and not strictly derived from scientific or mathematical calculations, and their geometrical structure is often disguised by the illusory effects. “In 1964 she come with her painting entitled ‘Current’ (Fig. 2.57), in which, black and white wavy lines are placed close to one another on the canvas surface, creating such a volatile figure-ground relationship.
that causes one's eyes to hurt. Another reaction that occurs is that the lines create afterimages of certain colors on the retina. Later, in 1965, she produced works in full color.\textsuperscript{81}

Fig.2.57. Currents, Bridget Riley, 1964

The number of artists working in the Op Art is very limited, among them J.R.Soto, Gerald Oster, John Goodyaer, Ludwig, Wilding and mo Levinson are few. Most of the Op artists have been created magical optical effect by the undulating lines with illusion of depth and movement.

2.4.5 Minimal Art

Minimalism in visual art, sometimes referred to as "ABC Art"\textsuperscript{82} emerged in New York in the 1960s. It was emerged as a reaction against the painterly forms of Abstract Expressionism. Many names were floated to characterize this new art, from ABC art and Reductive Art to literalism and systemic painting. "Minimalism" was the term that eventually stuck, perhaps because it best described the way the artists reduced art to the minimum number of colors, shapes, lines and textures. Frank Stella, Kenneth Noland, Al Held, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Ryman were some significant artists of this movement.

Minimalist artists were influenced by music composer John Cage, poet William Carlos Williams. Minimalists wanted to remove representation of self-expressionism from the art work, as well as evocations of illusion or transcendence. Minimalism's features included the geometric forms devoid of all metaphor and
neutral surfaces. As Barbra Rose wrote “an art whose blank, neutral, mechanical impersonality with the romantic, biographical abstract expressionist style which preceded it that spectators are chilled by its apparent lack of feeling or content.”

Minimalism had its roots in geometric abstraction of Bauhaus school, Russian Constructivist movement and in the works of Piet Mondrian and other artists associated with the movement De-Stijl. And later paintings of Helen Frankenthaler became influential in the development of minimalist tendency. “Much of this movement was an outgrowth of the soak and stain methods of Helen Frankenthaler. Artists such as Morris Lewis, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella began with her colours and, in effect, masculinized her art, giving their work hard edges, geometric shapes, and studied compositional arrangements which gradually evolved toward ever simpler designs until, by the late 60s, what they did became known as Minimalism, which was actually a much more descriptive term for the whole movement. If Abstract Expressionism had been obscure, Minimalism breathed such a rarefied air few aside from artists could appreciate intellectually what its creators were striving to accomplish.”

Fig.2.58. Die Fahne Hoch!, Frank Stella, 1959.
The painter, Frank Stella was the most significant artist of this tendency whose black stripe paintings were considered as earliest work of the Minimalism. His painting ‘Die Fahne Hoch!’ (Fig. 2.58) was first exhibited in 1959, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As Carl Andre wrote in the exhibition cataloge "Art excludes the unnecessary. Frank Stella has found it necessary to paint stripes. There is nothing else in his painting."85 Frank Stella himself acknowledged that “My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there… You can see the whole idea without any confusion… what you see is what you see.”86 Stella painted very simple canvases that were considered minimal due to their bare-bones composition. He used minimal elements like line, solid color and geometric forms to create his abstract compositions. He also painted the shaped canvas.
The Minimalists also sought to erase distinctions between paintings and sculptures, and to make instead, as Donald Judd called “specific objects.” In seeking to make objects which avoided the appearance of fine art objects, the Minimalists attempted to remove the appearance of composition from their work. They tried to purge all signs of the artist’s inspiration or thought processes from the fabrication of the object. Minimalists combined paint and canvas in such a way that the two became inseparable.

Other Minimalist artists included Richard Allen, Walter Darby Bannad, Larry Bell, Mel Bochner, Norman Carlberg, Judy Chicago, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt.

Op art and Minimalism are the new idioms of abstraction in the 1970's in Europe and America. “Art since the late 1970’s has often been described as pluralist: rather than encompassing one dominant style, the period has embraced many. Term such as ‘appropriation’, ‘deconstruction’, ‘simulation’ and ‘post-modern’ have been liberally applied by observer and practitioners trying to deal with complex nature of the times….. Yet despite the undeniable dominance of conceptual attitudes of art during the 1970’s (Which also helped to create new hybrids), abstract art as such did not entirely wither away” It is at present more likely that an artist's work is seen as an individual entity rather than part of a movement. Sean Scully, Gerhard Ritchen, John McLaughlin, Callum Innes, Ronald Davis, Larry Poons, and Yako Shiraishi are some significant abstract painters at the turn of the new century.
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