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U.S. Postal Service Honors Abstract Expressionists *Ten Revolutionary Works of Art Make Debut as Postage Stamps*



BUFFALO, NY — The U.S. Postal Service today honored the artistic innovations and achievements of a group of artists who moved the United States to the forefront of the international art scene with the release of the *Abstract Expressionists* commemorative postage stamps. The vibrant stamps feature works by Hans Hoffmann, Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Joan Mitchell.

“These bold artists used art to express complicated ideas and primitive emotions in simplified, abstract form,” said Linda Kingsley, USPS senior vice president, Strategy and Transition. “Although these stamps can’t compare in size to their real-life canvases, they bring the passion and spirit of abstract expressionism to an envelope near you. The Postal Service is proud to pay tribute to the legacy and unique perspectives of these revolutionary artists.”

Abstract expressionists believed that art no longer depicted experience but became the experience itself. They emphasized spontaneous, free expression and allowed personal intuition and the unconscious to guide their choice of imagery. Other shared traits include the use of large canvases and an emphasis on paint texture and distinctive brushstrokes.

“The abstract expressionists began one of the most important art movements in the last century, placing New York and American art at the very center of the art world for the first time,” noted Louis Grachos, director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, NY, home of four of the works featured on the stamps. “The Albright-Knox Art Gallery was one of the first museums to begin collecting abstract expressionist paintings, and we are very proud that work from our collection was chosen by the Postal Service as some

of the finest examples of the period.”

One of the most influential art teachers of the 20th century, **Hans Hofmann (1880-1966)** pioneered a method of improvisational painting that helped shape the development of abstract art after World War II. *The Golden Wall* (1961) features his trademark “push and pull” technique: geometric shapes that animate the canvas by seeming to shift and overlap.

Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) created a uniquely American blend of inspiration from late medieval and early Italian Renaissance masters, European cubism, and the freely expressive line of surrealism in his innovative “Pictographs” of the 1940s. *Romanesque Façade* (1949) brings together his aspiration to be intuitively understandable to everyone and to convey a universal emotional reality.

Mark Rothko (1903-1970) is best known for his monumental paintings of two or more rectangles floated within a field of color. *Orange and Yellow* (1956) features two rectangles painted in the vibrant tones that Rothko favored. Far from static, the rectangles seem to stretch and contract, while translucent, luminous colors bring them to life.

Influencing much of the American abstract art that followed, **Arshile Gorky (1904-1948)** developed an original style that combined cubism and surrealism with his own disguised imagery. *The Liver Is the Cock’s Comb* (1944) — one of his largest and greatest pictures — uses abstract forms to camouflage a deeply personal portrait of his family at home.

Clyfford Still (1904-1980) painted ponderous, abstract canvases to convey universal themes about the human condition. *1948-C* (1948) illustrates his signature style of richly textured surfaces, expressive lines and shapes, and sublime color in an expansive field. Still kept tight control of his work, much of which has never been seen.

Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) transformed the traditions of European art to create his own energetic and unconstrained style. While much of his work was entirely abstract, de Kooning’s best-known paintings blend abstraction and figural representation. Skittering black lines, shifting shapes, fragmented body parts, and flashes of color fill the surface of his 1948 work *Asheville*.

Barnett Newman (1905-1970) created deceptively simple works often characterized by large, even expanses of a single color punctuated by one or more vertical lines, which he called “zips.” One of several works based on ancient Greek mythology, *Achilles* (1952) does not feature a zip but rather a swath of red paint that moves down the canvas to end in a ragged edge.

Best known for his poured paintings, **Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)** created spontaneously painted works that marked a break with artistic tradition. For *Convergence* (1952), he laid blue and white clouds and loops of red and yellow atop a black-and-white base. The expressive color and drawing are so fresh that the paint still looks wet.

Robert Motherwell (1915-1991) viewed literature and philosophy as integral components of his art. He is best known for the “Elegy to the Spanish Republic” series, an ambitious group of somber abstract paintings. *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 34* (1953-1954) features black bars and ovals and vertical white stripes that partly obscure colors that refer to the flag of the Spanish Republic.

Joan Mitchell (1925-1992) created expansive paintings with an energetic style distinguished by large gestural strokes, driving brushwork, and emotional intensity. She is perhaps best known for her ability to communicate the visual sentiments of nature — or, in her own words, “to convey the feeling of the dying sunflower.” *La Grande Vallée 0* (1983) is one of 21 opulent French landscapes.

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office™ facility, at The Postal Store website at usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Abstract Expressionists Stamp
c/o Postmaster
1200 William Street
Buffalo, NY 14240-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the

mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by May 12, 2010.

How to Order First-Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic Catalog*. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

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