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The power of global connections™

A universal language:
Modern art from the
Bank of America Merrill Lynch Collection



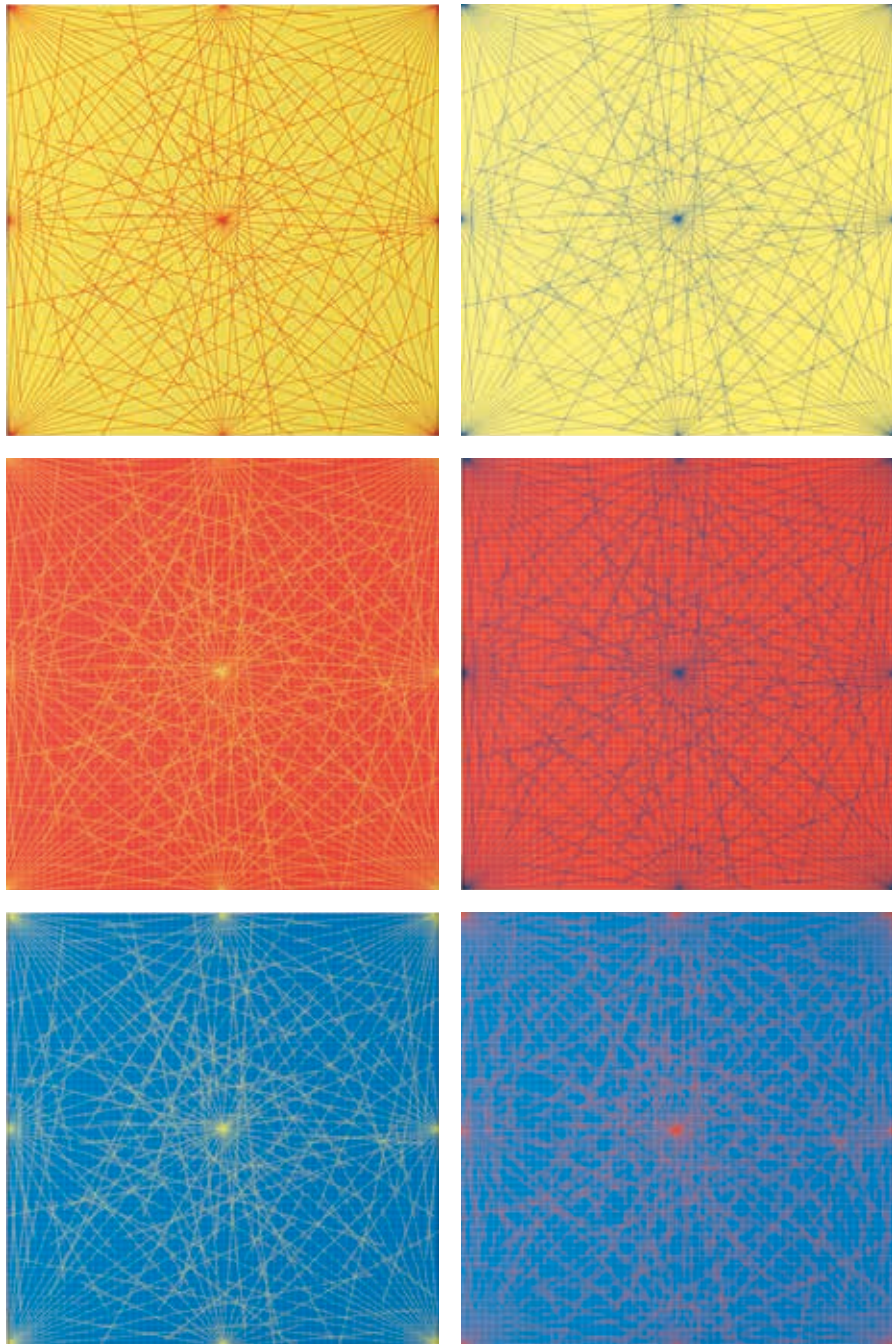
The Bank of America Merrill Lynch Collection is composed of artworks, archival materials and pieces that date back to the birth of the United States and continue through to cutting-edge video art of the twenty-first century.

The collection is particularly rich in modern art from the mid- through the late twentieth century. Many of the works are abstract, reflecting the evolution of art as a universal language.

Drawing from this collection, we have curated a remarkable selection of American abstract art, which we are showcasing in Hong Kong for the first time.

We hope that by sharing these works, we will foster greater understanding of the arts and the role they play in connecting people across cultures and enriching communities.

· Günther Förg (German, 1952 – 2013)
· *Leaves*, 1999
· Series of four etchings on rag paper, 28/50

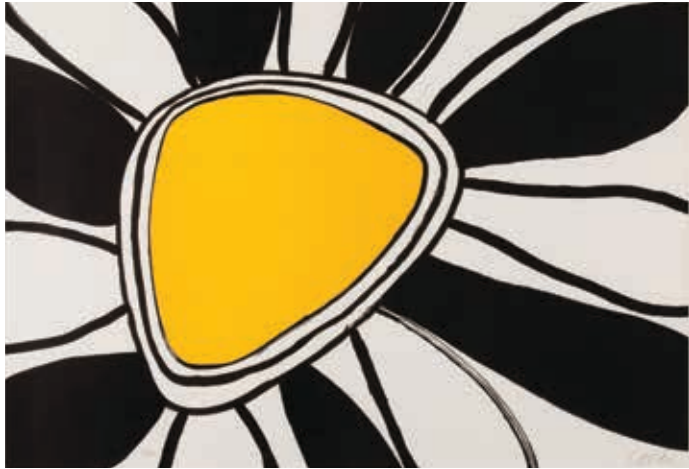


The universal language of abstraction connects us all. This visual form of communication through painting began in early twentieth-century Europe. The result was a vocabulary of shape, color, space, form and even the very tools of painting that resonate and connect art internationally to this day.

The message of abstract art is similar to that of the International Style in architecture that also originated in early twentieth-century Europe and flourished worldwide after World War II. Both movements utilized a visual language that idealistically represented the optimism and rebirth of the postwar world, free of boundaries and class structure, offering elucidations that were universally applicable, with no reference to local history or national vernacular.

In the early twentieth century, New York was a mere regional center of artistic activity, lacking the avant-garde schools and movements of its counterparts in Europe. Unfortunately, it was not art but rather war that led to New York's arrival as global art capital. World War II decimated Europe, its cities flattened, its people slaughtered and its economies in ruins. Leading up to and during the war, the European vanguard was uprooted by political upheaval and persecution. The European avant-garde crossed the Atlantic en masse, giving rise to an exodus of countless renowned artists, including Josef Albers, Piet Mondrian and Marcel Duchamp. They carried their visual language of abstraction, which transcended words or national identity, with them.

• Sol LeWitt (American, 1928 – 2007)
 • *Lines in Color on Color from Corner Sides and*
 • *Centers to Specific Points on a Grid, 1978*
 • Screenprint, 15/25



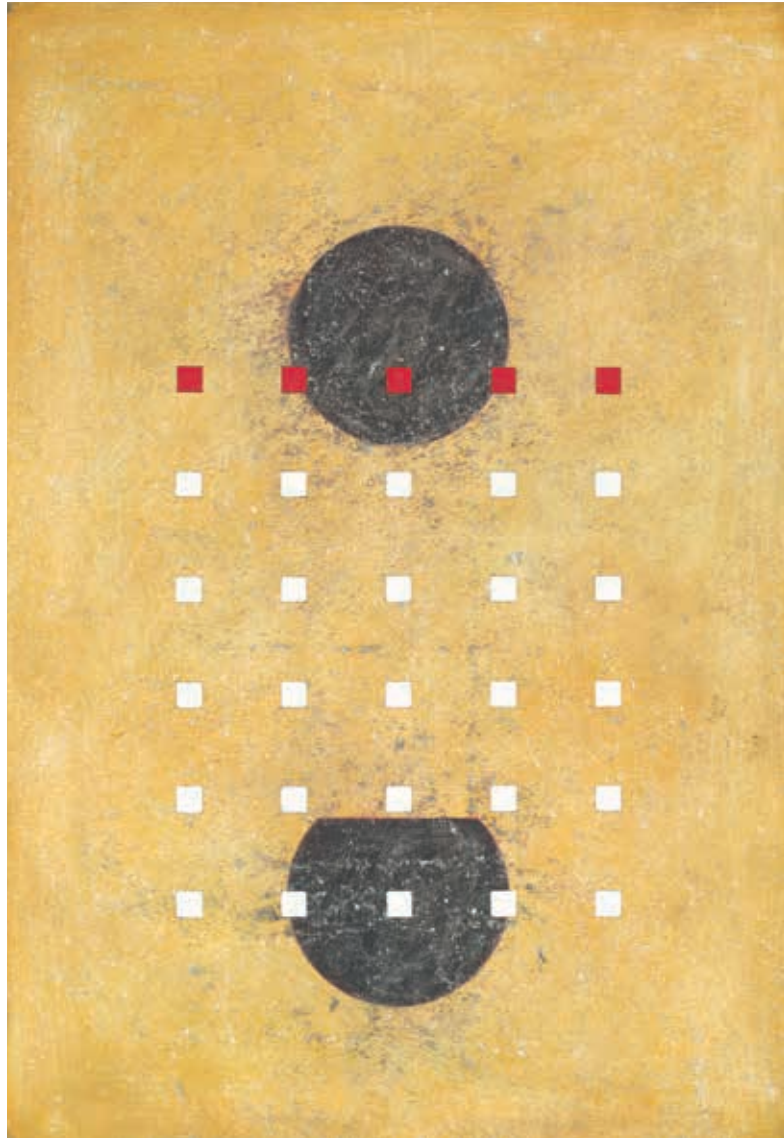
· Alexander Calder (American, 1889 – 1976)
 · *Fleurs d'Hélice*, 1969
 · Color lithograph, 74/75



· Bill Keating (American, b. 1932)
 · Untitled, 1977
 · Polished aluminum



· Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923 – 1997)
 · *Les Nymphéas*, 1993
 · Screenprint, 92/100



· Michael Bisbee (American, b. 1953)
 · Untitled, 1989
 · Oil on paper mounted on linen

By 1950, New York was the undisputed center of abstract painting. Its language was undeterred by the abrupt move and flourished in its new home. The techniques and innovations of the newly transplanted European art establishment seamlessly intermingled with the practice of young American artists, who were eager to learn from these teachers. What resulted was a visual fusion of the old and new, a unique art scene of a new era, manifesting first and most clearly in the Abstract Expressionist movement.

Abstract Expressionism, also known as the New York School, is widely considered the first uniquely American abstract movement. Described as Action painting, American and European artists came together working raw canvases, which served as messy records of the frenzied, passionate motions the artists used to put on layers of paint. The works are steeped in the personal sensibilities of the artists, drawing from the Surrealists' fascination with psychology and dreams and the fast-moving brushstrokes of the Expressionists and Kandinsky. Individual artists added their own abstract techniques. American-born Jackson Pollock dripped paint onto his large canvases, allowing his stray cigarette butts to garnish his works. Dutch-born Willem de Kooning's distorted figures were barely recognizable as human forms. The artists worked with house paints, enamels and unstretched canvases.



· Michael Bisbee (American, b. 1953)
 · Untitled, 1987
 · Oil on paper mounted on linen



⋮ Jules Olitski (American, b. Russia, 1922 – 2007)
⋮ *Extreme*, 1968
⋮ Acrylic on canvas



⋮ Michael Dailey (American, 1938 – 2009)
⋮ *Deep Blue Sea #4*, 1976
⋮ Oil on canvas



⋮ Charles Arnoldi (American, b. 1946)
⋮ *Rose*, 1978
⋮ Acrylic on canvas

As New York established itself as the center of the international art community, abstract painting of the New York School evolved and branched out. The works of modern art from the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Collection provide many wonderful examples of this global legacy.

Ukrainian-American Jules Olitski's pensive, monochromatic works are exemplary of a style known as Color Field painting. These usually large-scale works are more stylized and anonymous than their Abstract Expressionist counterparts, favoring a subdued, calculated study of color on canvas over the psychology of personal brushstrokes. Olitski's *Extreme*, 1968, is a wonderful example of this form of abstraction, its large-scale color gradation a thoughtful study on the evolution of color and even the texture of the paint with which it was created.



· Charles Perry (American, 1929 – 2011)
 · *Double Knot*, 1979
 · Bronze

Frank Stella's *Los Alamitos*, 1972, and *Agua Caliente*, 1972, are examples of Minimalist painting, a style that also evolved out of a focus solely on the medium itself, relying on the flatness of the canvas, the color of the paint and simple shapes to create self-contained works of art. Stella's colleague Sol LeWitt, whose 1977 *Lines in Color* series is part of this collection, worked with a similar, non-figurative geometric style. LeWitt created series upon series of grid-like patterns and shapes, reminiscent of the graphic squares of Josef Albers' color studies.

Ellsworth Kelly – whose elegant *Red Curve*, 1986, and *Blue Curve*, 1988, are featured in this collection – is a New York Minimalist artist born of the European avant-garde. Kelly fought with the American forces in Europe in World War II and returned to Paris to study art in the late 1940s. Upon his return to New York in the 1950s, he sought out the abstract artists he had been exposed to in Europe. Like his contemporaries Stella and LeWitt, Kelly focused on medium, particularly color. Kelly is known for his large-scale, geometric experiments with rich, opaque colors. He is a master printmaker, and these are marvelous examples of his work.



· Robert Kushner (American, b. 1949)
 · *Afternoon Hibiscus II*, 1995
 · Monotype with copper leaf



··· Charles Arnoldi (American, b. 1946)
 ··· *Fair Weather Friend*, 1998
 ··· Color lithograph, edition of 20



··· Charles Arnoldi (American, b. 1946)
 ··· *Untitled*, 1998
 ··· Lithograph, collograph, 19/20

Abstraction's relocation to New York was permanent, but it continued to migrate and evolve across the United States. Each new artist or generation of artists placed a unique imprint on the movement. An abstract style known as Hard-Edge painting emerged out of Los Angeles in the late 1950s. The artists sought to counter the personal gestures of the Abstract Expressionists with an almost mechanical application of paint and heavy, dense colors.

Painter Richard Diebenkorn spent time among the Abstract Expressionists in New York in the early 1950s before studying at the University of New Mexico and eventually moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, introducing the movement to many while his own abstract work evolved. Clyfford Still, though one of the original Abstract Expressionist artists, never actually resided in New York and was an influential professor at the California School of Fine Arts from 1946 to 1950.



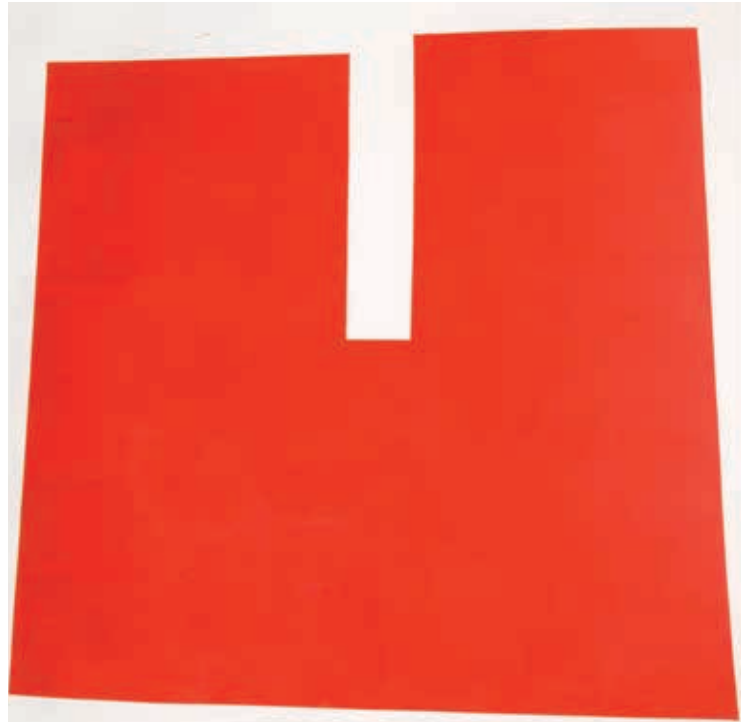
: William Ivey (American, 1919 – 1992)
 : Untitled (Yellow & Putty #27), 1984
 : Oil on canvas



: Sea Hyun Lee (Korean, b. 1967)
 : *Between Red 71*, 2009
 : Oil on linen



Richard Nonas (American, b. 1936)
Untitled (Red & Black), 1984
Oil on paper



Richard Nonas (American, b. 1936)
Untitled (Red & White), 1984
Oil on paper

Seattle artist William Ivey, whose work is featured here, was one of his students. *Untitled (Yellow & Putty #27)*, 1984, is a hybrid of Color Field painting with Abstract Expressionist brushstrokes. Los Angeles artist Charles Arnoldi was exposed to the work of the Abstract Expressionists and Color Field painters while visiting New York and brought their influence home. Arnoldi's sculpture and painting, including *Rose*, 1978, feature jagged wooden sticks or stick-like strokes reminiscent of the fast-paced brushstrokes of Jackson Pollock.

The legacy of the New York School's abstract language continues to resonate worldwide, and this collection of works embodies this trend. Günther Förg, whose work is currently displayed on the roof of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, imported abstraction back to Germany, his translucent, flat colors reminiscent of his Color Field predecessors. As our world continues to become more connected, the global evolution of abstraction will grow, bringing us further together.

Cover, detail:
Esther Podemski (American, b. Poland, 1946)
Elegy Series #4, 1980
Acrylic on canvas