Week 3 Lecture 4:
Abstract Expressionism: Gesture versus Field

key decade: 1940 into 1950s

Carried over from last week:

III. Codification of the Pollock Myth: Hans Namuth’s Jackson Pollock, 1951 (film)

IV. Lenore (“Lee”) Krasner (b. NY 1908, d. 1984)
   A. Krasner’s challenge
      1. The gender politics of Abstract Expressionism (Pollock to Hofmann “I am Nature”)
      2. The gender politics of postwar society: the little woman
      3. The gender politics of art: the oxymoron of a “female master”
   B. The influence of Pollock, the influence of Krasner

New today: “Abstract Expressionism” (name consolidates around 1954)

I. Gesture or “Action” painting
   A) Willem de Kooning, b. Netherlands 1904, to US in 20s, d. 1997
   B) Franz Kline, b. PA 1910 - 1962
   C) Robert Motherwell, b. CA 1915-1991
   D) “second generation” New York School - the problems of spontaneity & followers of de Kooning’s “signature” style (Jack Tworkov, Joan Mitchell...)

II. “Field” Painting
   A) Mark Rothko (b. Marcus Rothkowitz in Russia, 1903, to US as child, suicide 1970)
   C) Ad Reinhardt (b. Adolf in 1913, d. 1967)

Q: Can you see how Pollock could be both “gesture” and “field”?

SELECTED IMAGES

carried over:
Krasner Composition 1949
Krasner Three in Two 1956
Namuth Pollock Painting, photographs and film, 1950-51

gesture/field image titles on verso
GESTURE
de Kooning Pink Angels, 1948
de Kooning Excavation, 1950
de Kooning Gotham News 1955
de Kooning Woman 1 1950-52 (little collage)
de Kooning Woman and Bicycle 1952-53
Kline, Figure Eight, 1952
Kline, New York, NY 1953
Motherwell, Elegy to the Spanish Republic 1953 (series beg. 1948, through at least 1970s)
Motherwell, Open series begun ca. 1968
Mitchell, Hemlock 1956

FIELD
Rothko, Primeval Landscape 1945
Rothko, Violet Black Orange Yellow White & Red 1949 (Guggenheim)
Rothko, “Rothko” Chapel (Houston, St. Thomas University, Institute for Religion. Commissioned by de Menil family), 1970
Newman, Broken Obelisk 1963-67 installed outside the “Rothko Chapel”
Newman The Command 1946
Newman Vir Heroicus Sublimis 1950-51
Newman Stations of the Cross 1965-66
Reinhardt Abstract Painting Blue 1953 cruciform
Reinhardt Abstract Painting No. 5 1962