

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS FROM MoMA'S COLLECTION EXPLORES THE WORK OF AD REINHARDT AND MARK ROTHKO

Focus: Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko

The Maja Oeri and Hans Bodenmann Gallery, fourth floor
Ongoing

New York, April 25, 2008—*Focus: Ad Reinhardt and Mark Rothko*, now on view in MoMA's Painting and Sculpture galleries, features five paintings by Ad Reinhardt (American, 1913-67) and six by Mark Rothko (American, 1903-70) from the Museum's collection. The works in this single-gallery installation highlight the years between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, a period during which each artist identified the style and format that would engage him for the rest of his career. Reinhardt and Rothko's ideas about form and color challenged and reconsidered European artistic traditions and philosophies, giving rise to a unique American sensibility in art, particularly in painting. Their paintings were characterized not by the grand, expressive gestures and brushwork of their Abstract Expressionist colleagues, such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, but rather by subtleties in color, form, and composition. These large-scale works are all-encompassing, sustaining the viewers' attention by creating physical sensations and constantly changing visual perceptions. The exhibition is organized by Elizabeth Reede, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art.

Reinhardt utilized the planar surface of the canvas as a support for his experiments with and studies of monochrome palettes, in blue, red, and, black, throughout the early 1950s. By mid-decade he had committed to an increasingly nocturnal palette of layered, almost indistinguishable colors laid adjacent to one another in a vertical rectilinear format. These experiments are represented by the paintings *Number 107* (1950), *Abstract Painting (Blue)* (1952), and *Abstract Painting, Red* (1952). This exploration of color and symmetry resulted in Reinhardt's developing a trisected, three-by-three grid, which developed further in the 1950s and 1960s and concluded in the quietly ordered sub-patterns and homogeneous surfaces of his five-foot-square black paintings, such as *Abstract Painting* (1963).

Similar to Reinhardt, Rothko had a profound interest in internal compositional organization. Rothko often floated three blurry-edged rectangles atop one another, connecting the forms as much by the interstitial spaces as by the oscillating shapes themselves. His oversized, unframed, color-saturated canvases were meant to engage viewers by enveloping them. Works on view in the exhibition include *No. 16 (Red, Brown, and Black)* (1958), *No.37/No.19 (Slate Blue and Brown on Plum)* (1958), and *Red and Orange* (1955).

ABOUT THE FOCUS SERIES:

The *Focus* series provides an opportunity for in-depth and cross-disciplinary presentations that variously concentrate on a single artist's achievement, on broader artistic manifestations, on particular historical moments, or on significant groupings of works. This initiative aims to animate the larger history set forth in the Painting and Sculpture Galleries, ensuring that a greater number of familiar and unfamiliar works in the collection are rotated on and off view.

SPONSORSHIP

This exhibition, part of an ongoing series highlighting noteworthy aspects of the Museum's collection, is made possible by BNP Paribas.

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Public Information:

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