

## Artist Resources – Franz Kline (American, 1910-1962)

[Kline at MoMA](#)

[Kline at Gagosian Gallery](#)

[Kline at the Guggenheim](#)

[Kline at the Smithsonian](#)



Kline, 1961

Photograph: Fred W. McDarrah

In 1946, Kline was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Post of the American Legion to create the mural *Leighton*, depicting the town in which the artist attended high school. Learn from the Allentown Art Museum about how the mural was [preserved and put on permanent display](#).

Kline's work is often compared to East Asian traditions of calligraphy. A [Tate essay](#) by art historian Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer explores the visual and political angles to this comparison.

In 1958, the exhibition *The New American Painting* started its eight-country tour at the Museum of Modern Art. Read a digitized version of the [exhibition catalogue](#) and read an [essay about the exhibition](#) from the Tate, which was seen at the time as "an important bridge between American and European cultures" in the postwar era.

Read an [interview](#) between Kline and David Sylvester from 1960: "No I don't like to manipulate the paint in any way in which it doesn't normally happen. In other words, I wouldn't paint an area to make texture, you see?"

Available in the [New York Times archive](#), "Franz Kline – A Legacy in Black and White," discusses the artist's career twenty years after the artist's death.

Read an Artforum review by Richard Shiff of the 1994 exhibition [Franz Kline: Black & White, 1950-1961](#) at the Menil Collection in Houston. That same year, the [Fundació Antoni Tàpies](#) installed the exhibition *Franz Kline: Art and the Structure of Identity*.

The 2003 exhibition [Franz Kline Paintings from a Private American Collection](#) at Richard Gray Gallery displayed a selection of paintings that had never been exhibited together before.

Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'arte contemporanea launched the exhibition [Franz Kline](#) in 2004. The exhibition brought together almost one hundred works by Kline, including major large-scale paintings and their study drawings.

Watch a [video](#) by the curator of MoMA's 2010 exhibition, *Abstract Expressionist New York*, about Kline's work in the show.

Auction houses often produce videos about artists' work on auction. Watch one by Christie's about one inspired by the [1950s New York City jazz scene](#) and one by Sotheby's about [Elizabeth \(1958\)](#), inspired by his ballerina wife.

A 2015 lecture by Corina Rogge and Zahira Véliz-Bomford discusses [the challenge of conserving](#) Franz Kline paintings.



Kline, c. 1950s

Photograph: Aaron Siskind



Franz Kline (American, 1910-1962)

**Washington Wall**, 1959

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:104.1

Abstract Expressionist painter Franz Kline became known for his black-and-white compositions in the late 1940s. His bold, dramatic, and seemingly spontaneous brushstrokes placed his work in dialogue with fellow Action Painters, including Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). In the late 1950s, Kline began to add color into his work. **Washington Wall** is one of two mural-like paintings from 1959 that feature bright, colorful strokes. The aquamarine blue, green, brown, and red give a new dynamism to Kline's characteristic black-and-white composition. According to the artist: "In using color, I never feel I want to add to or decorate a black and white painting. I simply want to feel free to work both ways."

*On view June 26, 2024 – January 5, 2025*



Franz Kline (American, 1910-1962)

**Mister**, 1959

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:104.1

Associated with the New York School in the 1940s and 1950s, Franz Kline's earlier work featured colorful landscapes, portraits, and murals. In 1948, the artist was in a frustrating slump and turned to friends Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) and Elaine de Kooning (1918-1989) for advice. As the story goes, Kline enlarged images of his work on a Bell-Opticon opaque projector in the de Kooning studio and was inspired by the abstract shadows and bold lines that emerged. The event marked a profound shift in the artist's oeuvre as he turned to black-and-white abstraction. The slashing, dramatic, seemingly spontaneous brushstrokes of **Mister** now define Kline's Abstract Expressionist style and Action Painting technique. However, the artist never simply painted black strokes on blank, white canvas, instead layering the colors to create complex, unified compositions. He once remarked: "I paint the white as well as the black, and the white is just as important."

*On view November 24, 2021 – June 13, 2022*