

## February Artist: Helen Frankenthaler

### Slide 1: Photo of a young Helen Frankenthaler

Helen Frankenthaler was born in New York City in 1928. Although she came from a wealthy family, her and her sisters were encouraged to develop their talents and skills and get an education. After graduating from Bennington College in Vermont, she studied with prominent NYC artists part of the Abstract Expressionists movement. She was greatly influenced by Jackson Pollock and is considered a second generation Abstract Expressionist painter.

### Slide 2: Mountains and Sea (1952)

This painting was the first piece of art to get noticed by the art world. She created it when she was only 23 years old. It was done with her own technique she developed called soak-stain. It measures 7ft by 10ft.

### Slide 3: Helen Frankenthaler

Here she is pouring paint onto a large unprimed canvas as part of her soak-stain technique of painting. The paint was thinned with turpentine and this made it flow more freely and soak into the canvas. This technique became part of a style called Color Field.

### Slide 4: Cool Summer (1962)

10 years after her breakthrough painting Mountains and Sea, she created Cool Summer. This painting is oil on canvas. Its colors are richer and the white spaces between the color create a sense of movement and life that is created more with color than line.

### Slide 5: Blue Atmosphere (1963)

Using the soak stain method she created, Frankenthaler was able to create many different looks. Even though it may look accidental, the artist plans out what they want to create. This painting was made only a year after the last one we looked at. How is it different? How is it similar?

### Slide 6: Canyon (1965)

During this time Frankenthaler started using acrylic paint instead of oil to create different looks. Acrylic paint is more fluid and tends to flow across the canvas and stop with more defined edges than the thinned oil paint. Do you think it she gave it a good title?

### Slide 7: Savage Breeze (1974)

Frankenthaler wanted to continually push herself as an artist and try new mediums. Here is an example of different style she began working with: woodcuts. It was done with 8 colored blocks of wood on handmade paper.

Slide 8: Desert Pass (1976)

Desert Pass is an excellent example of how Frankenthaler responded to the natural landscape. This piece was inspired by a trip to the American Southwest. It captures the colors and forms and the climate of the region. This is also a woodcut.

Slide 9: Essence Mulberry (1977)

During this time many artists had gone away from woodcuts. Frankenthaler decided she wanted to sort of reinvent it with her own style. This piece was done by carving four blocks, one each of oak, birch, walnut and lauan, all having different printed effects and using mulberry juice instead of paint.

Slide 10: Madame Butterfly (2000)

"There are no rules, that is one thing I say about every medium, every picture ... that is how art is born, that is how breakthroughs happen. Go against the rules or ignore the rules, that is what invention is about." This statement made by Frankenthaler sums up her views on art. This woodcut was a culmination of all of her art experience. It's a woodcut that resembles her soak stain method she developed years earlier. It was made with 102 colors, from forty-six woodblocks on 3 sheets of handmade paper.

Slide 11: Helen Frankenthaler (2003)

In her studio on Contentment Island in Darien, Conn., in 2003, with her work, "Blue Lady." Helen Frankenthaler continued to create art throughout her life. In 2001 she was awarded the National Medal of Arts. She died in 2011 at the age of 83.